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Young Men; Faults and Ideals

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY

Things to Live For

BY

J. R. MILLER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE," "BUILDING OF CHARACTER," ETC.

Life is a sheet of paper white
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two, and then comes night.

LOWELL

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THINGS TO LIVE FOR.

CHAPTER I.

THINGS THAT ARE WORTH WHILE.

He built a house, time laid it in the dust;
He wrote a book, its title now forgot;
He ruled a city, but his name is not
On any tablet graven, or where rust
Can gather from disuse, or marble bust.
He took a child from out a wretched cot,
Who on the State dishonor might have brought,
And reared him to the Christian's hope and trust.
The boy, to manhood grown, became a light
To many souls, preached for human need
The wondrous love of the Omnipotent.
The work has multiplied like stars at night
When darkness deepens; every noble deed
Lasts longer than a granite monument.

SARAH K. BOLTON.

THERE are things which are not worth while. If a man lives seventy years, and then leaves nothing good behind him, nothing which will stay in the world after he is gone, enriching

it, beautifying it, sweetening its life, has it been really worth while for him to live?

Or suppose that in his threescore and ten years a man lives to do evil, speaking words which become seeds of unholiness, scattering influences which cause blight, doing things which hurt other lives, who will say it has been worth while for him to live? He may have been a splendid success in a worldly way, amassing money, winning fame, getting honor, his later years a blaze of glory, his funeral one of magnificent pomp; yet has his life been worth while?

There are things which are worth while. A man spends his seventy years in lowly Christian life. He fears God, and walks after God's commandments. He makes no marked success according to the world's rating. He is even spoken of by others with a sort of pity, as a man who never has been successful. Yet all the while he has lived honestly and faithfully in his place. While other men have been fighting for position, scrambling for honor, thinking meanwhile only of self, he

has been giving out his life in generous love, serving others, doing good. He has not gotten on in the world, and his hands are empty at the last. But there is a success which is not measured by the standards of the business world. There is an invisible sphere in which values are not rated by dollars and cents, but by their moral character. In that sphere a cup of cold water given to a thirsty one in the name of Christ will count for more than the piling of a fortune for self. Hence it is that a man who has seemed unsuccessful, but nevertheless has been doing good all the while in Christ's name, living unselfishly, has really achieved a success which lifts his name to high honor.

Sometimes in the country you will see an old water-wheel outside of a mill. The water fills its buckets, and all day long it turns round and round in the sunshine. It seems to be working in vain. You see nothing that it is doing by its constant motion. But its shaft runs through the wall; and within the mill it turns the stones which grind the wheat,

and the bolts which prepare the flour for the bread that feeds hundreds, or runs the looms which weave the fabrics that keep many warm in winter. There are lives which with all their ceaseless toiling seem to be accomplishing nothing; and yet they reach through the veil into the sphere of the unseen, and there they make blessing and benefit whose value is incalculable.

Some good people become discouraged because they do not seem to get on in life. They work hard, but can scarcely make ends meet. As fast as they earn, they must spend. A father toils through the years, bringing up a family, and dies at last a poor man. Other men who began with him as boys succeed and grow rich. He feels that he has failed. But consider what he has really achieved. To begin with, work itself is one of life's best blessings. This man's years of daily task-work have built up in him many of the best qualities of true, worthy character, — promptness, accuracy, faithfulness, patience, persistence, obedience. Work, too, has given him

health, has kept him from many an evil, has knit in him thews of strength, has wrought in him a spirit of self-reliance and independence.

Consider, too, the value of his work to his family. He has provided a home for his household where the wife and mother has presided with love and gentleness. Through his toil he has furnished means for the education of his children. In his own life he has set them an example of honesty, truthfulness, unselfishness, diligence, and faith. Dwelling himself near the heart of Christ, he has made in his home an atmosphere of heavenliness in which his family has grown up. He has taught them the word of God, and has given them books to read which have put into their minds and hearts pure, inspiring, and elevating thoughts. One by one they go out of their father's house to become influential in building up homes of their own, carrying with them and in them a heritage of character which shall make them blessings in the world.

Though this good man leaves no money and no monument of material success, yet his life has been well worth while. He has given to the world something better than money. He has shown it an example of a true and faithful life, in conditions that were not always inspiring. He has maintained in it a godly home, keeping the fires burning on God's altar, and putting into the lives of his household the influences of religion. He has trained his children, and sent them forth to be useful members of society, new centres of good influence, new powers for righteousness. His name may be forgotten among men, but the benediction of his life and work will stay in the world forever.

The lesson may be broken up a little. It is worth while to make sacrifices of love in order to do good. In India they tell the story of the Golden Palace. Sultan Ahmed was a great king. He sent Yakoob, the most skilful of his builders, with a large sum of money, to erect in the mountains of snow the most splendid palace ever seen. Yakoob went

to the place, and found a great famine prevailing among the people. Many were dying. Instead of building the palace, he took the money, and gave it to buy bread for the starving people. At length Ahmed came to see his palace, and there was no palace there. He sent for Yakoob and learned his story, then grew very angry, and cast the builder into chains. "To-morrow thou shalt die," he said; "for thou hast robbed thy king." But that night Ahmed had a wonderful dream. There came to him one in shining garments, who said, "Follow me." Up they soared from earth till they came to heaven's gate. They entered, and lo, there stood a palace of pure gold, more brilliant than the sun! "What palace is this?" asked Ahmed. His guide answered, "This is the palace of Merciful Deeds, built for thee by Yakoob the wise. Its glory shall endure when all earth's things have passed away." Then the king understood that Yakoob had done most wisely with his money.

It is only a heathen legend, but its teach-

ing is true. If we are doing true work, we need not concern ourselves about visible results. Though in self-denying life we build no palaces on earth, we are piling far nobler walls beyond the skies. The money we give in service and sacrifice of helpfulness may add nothing to our bank-account; but it is laid up as treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

It is worth while to turn away from our own cherished plans any hour to do the things of love that God may send to our hand. It is not easy for us to have our own ways broken into. We do not like to have our pleasures and our congenial occupations interrupted by calls to do services for others. Yet no doubt these very things are ofttimes the most splendid things of all that our hands find to do. They are fragments of God's will breaking into the schedule of our own will, pieces of angel ministry to which we are called in the midst of our worldly work.

Whatever adds in even the smallest way

to the world's brightness and cheer is worth while. One who plants a flower in a bare place where only bleakness was before is a benefactor. One who says an encouraging word to a disheartened neighbor, gives a look of love to a lonely one, or speaks a sentence which may become strength, guidance, or comfort to another, does something worth while. We never know how small a thing may become a benediction to a human life.

"Only a thought, but the work it wrought
Could never by pen or tongue be taught;
For it ran through a life like a thread of gold,
And the life bore fruit a hundred-fold."

It was worth while for David to write the Twenty-third Psalm to go singing everywhere to the end of time. It was worth while for Mary to break the alabaster vase, pouring the nard on the head and feet of the Master; all the world is sweeter ever since from the perfume of her ointment. Every singer who has sung a pure, joyous song has given something to earth to make it better. Every artist who

has painted a worthy and noble picture, or made the smallest thing of beauty which will stay in the world, has added something to the enriching of our human life. Every lowly Christian who has lived a true, courageous life amid temptation and trial has made it a little easier for others to live right. Every one who has let fall into the stream of this world's life wholesome words, good words, divine lessons, has put into the current of humanity a handful of spices to sweeten a little the bitter waters. It is always worth while to live nobly, victoriously, struggling to do right, showing the world even the smallest fragments of divine beauty.

It is worth while to be a friend. No other privilege is more sacred, no other responsibility is greater. One writes of a friend who had gone: —

A flash! You came into my life,
And lo! adown the years
Rainbows of promise stretched across
The sky grown gray with tears.
By day you were my sun of gold,
By night, my silver moon;

I could not from the Father's hands
Have asked a greater boon.

Life's turbid stream grew calm and clear;
The cold winds sank to rest;
Hand-clasped with you, no bitter pain
Found dwelling in my breast.
I did not dread life's care and toil,
Your love dispelled all gloom;
And now on graves of buried hopes
The sweetest violets bloom.

My every breath and every thought
Were pure because of you;
I had not dreamed that heaven could be
So close to mortal view.
My hands and feet were swift to do
The good that near them lay;
And in my heart throughout the year
The joy-bird sang each day.

A flash! You passed out of my life —
No, no! Your spirit still
Is sun and moon and guiding star
Through every cloud and ill.
As down the rainbow years I go,
You still are at my side;
And some day I shall stand with you
Among the glorified.

It is indeed worth while to be a friend. It is to come into people's lives with hallowed

and hallowing influences, and then never again to go out of them. For to be a friend at all is to stay forever in the life. God never takes from us a friend he gives. Therefore the privilege granted to a few rare spirits of being the friend of many people is one of earth's most sacred gifts. To stand by others in their time of joy and in their hour of faintness; to guide them when the way is perilous; to comfort them in the day of sorrow; to be their counsellor in perplexity; to be the inspirer in them of noble thoughts, gentle sentiments, upward influences; and then to sit beside them when they are entering the valley of shadows, — no ministry on earth is holier and diviner than this.

One of our poets has told us that our life is a leaf of white paper on which each of us may write his word or two — and then comes night. What are we writing on our little leaf? It should be something that will bless those who read it. It should be something fit to carry into eternity; it must be most beautiful and worthy for this. It should be

something which we shall not be ashamed to meet again, for this leaf will appear in judgment, bearing our word or two, good or bad, just what we put on it; and by this we shall be judged. It is well that we do only things that are worth while; things that are right and true and pure and lovely, things that will last forever. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Lucy Larcom writes:—

"'How to make lives worthy the living?'
The question haunts us every day;
It colors the first blush of sunrise,
It deepens the twilight's last ray.
There is nothing that brings us a drearier pain
Than the thought, 'We have lived, we are living, in vain.'

We need, each and all, to be needed,
To feel we have something to give
Toward soothing the moan of earth's hunger;
And we know that then only we live
When we feed one another as we have been fed,
From the hand that gives body and spirit their bread."

CHAPTER II.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF LIVING.

Children of yesterday,
  Heirs of to-morrow,
What are you weaving —
  Labor and sorrow?
Look to your looms again;
  Faster and faster
Fly the great shuttles
  Prepared by the Master.
Life's in the loom:
  Room for it — room.

MARY A. LATHBURY.

ALL life is serious. We are not butterflies, to flutter a little while in the air and then drop into the dust. The words we speak and the things we do are not snowflakes dropping into the water, "a moment white, then gone forever," but are beginnings of immortalities. We are not done with anything in life as it passes from our hands. Nothing is indifferent. There is a moral character in all that we do. Either we are

blessing the world, or sowing the seed of a curse in every influence that goes out from us. It becomes us, therefore, to give conscientious thought to all our life.

In one of his epistles St. Paul has a remarkable passage about working for God. He tells us that God and we are co-workers, and that we can do nothing without him. This is true even in our common affairs. In a little shop on a back street a man makes a mariner's compass. It is taken on board a great ship, and by means of its trembling needle the vessel is guided over the sea unerringly to its destination. A man made the compass. Yes; a man and God. A man did the mechanical work, put the wonderful instrument together; but it was God who put into the magnet its mysterious power. This illustrates a common law. God and man are co-workers; and without God man can do nothing, while God's perfect work needs man's best.

It is true especially in spiritual work. The gospel had been preached in Corinth by St.

Paul; and as one might throw a handful of spices into a bitter fountain and sweeten the waters, so the words of the gospel dropped into the foul life of the heathen city were sweetening it. Now, there was a large body of faithful Christians in that city. They had been brought to Christ, and were his disciples. This was Paul's work. Yes; Paul's and God's. Paul was a great preacher, but it was by the power of God that the mysterious change had been wrought. So it is in all Christian work. We soon learn that we can do nothing without God.

Yet our part is important, and we must do it well and faithfully. Carelessness or neglect may lead to the marring of a life or the loss of a soul, and the blame will be ours. A young mother wrote in a letter, "When I took my little boy in my arms the first time, and his little hand closed tightly round my finger, I realized what a good woman I must be in order to help him to be a good man." God needs our faithfulness in doing his work on human lives. That is, he has

ordained to use us, and we are held responsible for doing well our part. Our unfaithfulness may mar the work of God.

St. Paul had something serious to say also about the responsibility of those who work upon the walls of God's temple. They may build either gold, silver, and costly stones, or wood, hay, and stubble. There is only one foundation, — Christ. Gold, silver, and costly stones represent the beautiful things we should build into our life, or into the lives of others.

Gravely responsible is the work of a Christian minister. Whenever he speaks to people, he is laying materials on the walls of God's temple. He must do work worthy of God's honor. If he has only wood, hay, and stubble to bring, he would better never enter the pulpit. The same is true of the Sunday-school teacher. He also is at work on God's building. If he has only the trifles of week-day topics, bits of gossip, airy nothings, to give to his class, what that is worth while is he putting into the pupils' lives?

The lesson applies to parents. They get the young life from God when as yet nothing has been built into it. What do they bring to put into the character they are helping to build? What are the influences of their home? What songs are sung beside the child's cradle? What lessons are taught at a time when every lesson becomes a permanent part of the life? What books are put into the young hands when every sentence makes an indelible mark on the soul?

But the teaching is for us all; for we are all builders on the life-walls of others. What opportunities for edifying each other we all have in our conversations, as we sit together or walk by the way! Words are wonderful things. They may become adornments in the life of him to whom they are spoken; they may give happiness, courage, comfort, or impulse. There have been single words which have changed destinies. Then there are also words which are only rubbish, — wood, hay, and stubble. Too much of the common conversation of the street, the parlor, the table, is

poor building-material to put into human lives. Too much of it is only idle words. Too much is criticism of the absent, hurtful gossip about people. Too much of it is wrangling and bitterness.

We may think, too, of what we are building and allowing to be built on the walls of our own character. What are our companionships? Companionships make us. Every one who takes a half-mile walk with us, or talks with us ten minutes, lays something on the wall of our life. The books we read do their part in our character-building. Our thoughts also have their important place among the builders. As we think, so we grow. Trifling thoughts, — a flippant, shallow life. Sad thoughts, — a sombre character. Reverent thoughts, — a life on which rests the hallowed marks of divinity. Not only do they go into the walls of our own life, but when they are uttered they go out into the world and build themselves into the character of others, becoming impulses, inspirations, in people's hearts. What are our thoughts, —

gold, silver, costly stones, or wood, hay, stubble? Ella Wheeler Wilcox has these earnest lines about thoughts: —

I hold it true that thoughts are things
Endowed with bodies, breath, and wings;
And that we send them forth to fill
The world with good results — or ill.

That which we call our secret thought
Speeds to the earth's remotest spot,
And leaves its blessings or its woes,
Like tracks behind it, where it goes.

It is God's law. Remember it
In your still chamber as you sit
With thoughts you would not dare have known,
And yet make comrades when alone.

These thoughts have life; and they will fly
And leave their impress by and by,
Like some marsh breeze, whose poisoned breath
Breathes into homes its fevered death.

And after you have quite forgot
Or all outgrown some vanished thought,
Back to your mind to make its home,
A dove or raven it will come.

Then let your secret thoughts be fair;
They have a vital part and share
In shaping worlds and moulding fate —
God's system is so intricate.

There is more of the lesson. "The fire shall prove each man's work of what sort it is." Whatever in it is gold, silver, costly stones, shall abide; but whatever is wood, hay, stubble, shall perish. The things we are putting into the lives of others these days, are they imperishable things — things that will be elements of beauty in the immortal life? It is not enough that they be not evil; the yet more searching question is: Are they the gold, silver, and costly stones of truth and love?

Very grave is the responsibility of the man or the woman who writes a book, — a novel, for example, which catches the fancy of people, and is read by thousands. "It is a great success," men say. Yes; but what does it put into the lives of those who read it? What impulses does it start? What impressions does it leave? Does it kindle holy or unholy fires in the hearts of its readers? Is it gold, silver, costly stones; or is it wood, hay, and stubble that it builds into life-walls? It is a high privilege to be permitted to write

words that carry in them the seeds of good, that become strength, encouragement, cheer, hope, and comfort in other lives. But suppose that one's gift is perverted from its holy use, and the words one writes carry in them the poison of moral death; what serious accounting must the writer have when the harvest is gathered up!

The work done in our own life also, as well as that which we do in other lives, must be proved; and only that which is immortal shall endure. No doubt many of us build much rubbish into our character. We read books that do us no good, even if they leave in us no virus of evil. We indulge in thoughts, feelings, imaginings, longings, which build up in us nothing that we can carry into eternity. We spend hours in conversation, consisting at best of only idle words, imparting no inspiration toward better things. Whether in our own life or in the lives of those about us, only that which is white and will last forever is fit building-material.

The end of St. Paul's lesson shows us a

man, saved himself, so as through fire, while all his work is burned up. We think of one who has spent all his life in building a house, and gathering into it the things for which he has toiled. The house is burned, with all that is in it. The man himself escapes unhurt, but he carries nothing with him. So, says St. Paul, shall some men pass into heaven, barely saved, but losing all their work. They have lived uselessly. They have advanced Christ's kingdom not at all. In all their life they have done nothing that will endure. The world would have been quite as well without them and their work. We need to remember that it is not enough to be busy, active, ever doing something; the work we do must be true work for God, such as will really bless the world.

There is something yet more serious in this lesson. One who builds only uselessly will be saved, though his work shall perish. But one who destroys God's temple shall himself be destroyed. One may destroy the temple of God by teaching error which shall mislead

souls, or by setting an example before others which shall influence them toward evil; or one may hurt other lives by selfishness or ungentleness. There are some Christians who seem never to have learned love's secret of helpfulness. There is nothing that this sorrowing, sinning world needs more than gentleness, — gentleness like that of Him of whom it is written, that he would not break a bruised reed. We need to pray for the grace of gentleness, that we may walk softly among men, never hurting another life by harsh word or ungentle act.

It is sad enough to be a useless Christian, doing no good, building nothing that will last; but it is sadder far to live to tear down with unhallowed hand what others with love, prayer, and toil have built up; or by unloving and censorious words to discourage those who are sincerely trying to do God's work, and to bless other lives. We all should pray to be saved from the doom of those who destroy the temple of God.

No one should be content to live either

hurtfully or uselessly. While such mighty, immortal potencies are in all life, we should not be satisfied with anything less than the consecration of our every act and word and every shred of our influence to holiness and good.

CHAPTER III.

WHOLESOME OR UNWHOLESOME LIVING.

"If I lay waste and wither up with doubt
The blessed fields of heaven, where once my faith
Possessed itself serenely, safe from death;
If I deny the things past finding out;
Or if I orphan my own soul of One
That seemed a Father, and make void the place
Within me where he dwelt in power and grace,
What do I gain, that am myself undone?"

THE word wholesome means whole, sound, having perfect health. It is applied usually to conditions. Thus we speak of a wholesome climate, meaning a climate that is salubrious and healthful; or of wholesome food, meaning food that is nutritious. But the word may be used also of a person. Hawthorne speaks of a thoroughly wholesome heart, and of the purifying influence scattered throughout the atmosphere of the household by the presence of one such heart. The dictionaries tell us that this use of the word is probably obsoles-

cent. But it should not be allowed to grow obsolete; for we have no other word which quite expresses the same shade of meaning, and it is a quality of life for which we much need a name.

There are wholesome people who indeed exert a purifying and healthful influence wherever they go. They are hale, whole, normal in their make-up and in their condition. They are healthy, not in body only, but also in mind and in spirit. Such persons are blessings wherever they are found, full of life and of inspiration. Even unconsciously they diffuse strength, cheer, hope, courage, by the mere influence of their presence.

But there are also unwholesome people, whose influence is not toward the things that are beautiful and good. Their unwholesomeness may be physical, or it may be in their mental or spiritual condition. A common form is what in general we call morbidness. Whatever its cause, it is the result of oversensitiveness. Morbid people are easily disturbed in their feelings. They yield readily

to depression of spirits. The smallest cause makes them gloomy. Their imagination plays a mischievous part in creating unhappiness for them. They imagine slights when none were intended or even dreamed of. They are apt to be very exacting toward their friends, continually demanding renewed assertions of faithfulness and constancy, and often expressing fears and doubts, and raising questions. Thus they make friendship hard even for those who love them best.

These morbid people see all life and all the world through tinted glasses, tinted with the unhealthy hue of their own mental condition. They see their neighbor's faults, but not the excellences of his character. They have an eye for the blemishes and the unlovely peculiarities of others, and for the disagreeable things of life. They fret and chafe at the smallest discomforts in their lot, and fail to get happiness and pleasure from their many and great blessings. They are unhappy even in the most favorable circumstances, and discontented even in the kindliest conditions. The trouble

is not in outside things, but in themselves. They are like a fever patient who tosses restlessly on his bed and complains of the heat of the room, while all the while the fever is in himself, not in his room. It is the unwholesomeness of men's own spirit that makes the world and all life about them so full of discomfort for them.

There are many forms and phases of unwholesomeness in life. Some people are unwholesome in their religion. They find no happiness in it. It does not make them joy-givers. They are sombre, gloomy Christians. They are wanting in the grace of cheerfulness and in heartiness. They are severe in their judgment of others, sometimes uncharitable and censorious. Their own religion is a burden to them, and they would make religion a burden to all who profess it. It vexes them to see a rejoicing Christian; for they suppose that joyousness is a sign of triviality of heart, and of the want of a due consciousness of life's gravity and seriousness. They think of religion as always severe, stern, solemn, sad.

Some people are unwholesome in their affections, giving way to envy, jealousy, and suspicion, unmistakable symptoms of unhealthiness. Some are unwholesome in their temper, lacking the power of self-control, permitting anger to dominate them and lead them to unseemly outbreaks. Some one says: "Losing the temper takes all the sweet, pure feeling out of life. You may get up in the morning with a clean heart, full of song, and start out as happy as a bird; but the moment you are crossed and give way to your temper, the clean feeling vanishes, and a load as heavy as lead is rolled upon your heart; you go through the rest of the day feeling like a culprit. Any one who has experienced this feeling knows, too, that it cannot be shaken off, but must be prayed off."

These are suggestions of common phases of unwholesomeness. A wholesome life is one that is free from these and other unhealthinesses. It is hale and whole. Good physical health ought to make it easier for one to have also mental and spiritual health. But

in fact many a person whose bodily health is excellent is very unwholesome in disposition, while many a physical invalid possesses a most wholesome spirit. Ofttimes radiant souls live in diseased and suffering bodies.

One mark of wholesomeness in a life is cheerfulness. It is not without its burdens, its cares, its trials; but it has learned the lesson of victoriousness. Nothing breaks its glad-heartedness; nothing chokes its song of joy. The peace of Christ in the heart is the secret of it. There is an Old Testament promise which says: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." There is a New Testament word which bids us be anxious about nothing, but to make every want known to God in prayer; and then promises that the peace of God shall guard our heart and our thoughts in Christ Jesus One writes: —

> Through all the tumult of this busy life,
> So overfull, with such ambitions rife,
> There waits a quiet place deep in my heart,
> Wherein this restlessness can have no part.

A quiet place in which my soul can rest,
As rests a weary bird soft in its nest,
Screened from the light by branches bending low,
Safe hidden from the eye of lurking foe.

No guest is welcomed in this secret place;
No careless thoughts its holy walls deface;
For here we know that God is very nigh —
We love this quiet place, my soul and I.

He who understands this has learned one of the inmost secrets of a wholesome life. With the peace of Christ in the heart, even the sorest trials and the bitterest sorrows will not make a life unwholesome; rather the outcome of struggle and suffering will be the promotion of spiritual health. Sorrow rightly endured cleanses the life of its earthliness and its unhealthiness, and leaves it holier and more beautiful. It is pitiful to see people suffer and not grow better — grow worse indeed continually. One writes wisely: "It would be a poor result of all our anguish and our wrestling if we were nothing but our old selves at the end of it; if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-

confident blame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of the unknown toward which we have sent forth irrepressible yearnings in our loneliness. Let us rather be thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form as forces do, and passing from pain into sympathy." The wholesome use of grief is the putting of its pain into new energy of loving and living.

Another mark of wholesomeness in a life is generous love. Our affections make us what we are. The things we love tell whether we are living for earth or for heaven. We are commanded not to love the world, because the world passes away, and the things in it which are loved and sought after; but to love the things which are eternal, and then we shall endure forever. Love is all of life. All duty is included in loving God and our neighbor. Loving God is always first. Unless we love God we really do not love at all. Love that lacks the divine ele-

ment, and that is not born of and inspired by God's love in the heart, is only earthly, and will not endure — is not worth while. In the truly wholesome life there is love to God, and then a love for others born of this which is like God's love for us.

This love is forgiving. We are taught to link together the spirit of forgiveness and the desire for forgiveness. "Forgive us, as we forgive," we pray. This love is also generous. It is free from all miserable envying and jealousy. It rejoices in the happiness and the prosperity of others. It sees the best, not the worst, there is in the lives of other people. Instead of watching for blemishes and faults, it looks for the lovely qualities. It does not find the thorn among the roses, but does find the rose among the thorns. It is charitable, overlooking flaws and mistakes, and seeing ever the possibilities of better things. It is unselfish, forgetting its own interests in thinking of the interests of others. It is gentle, with a heart of quick and tender sympathy for sorrow or suffering,

and a hand skilful and ever ready to give help when help is needed.

Margaret Fuller said that all the good she had ever done had been done by calling on every nature for its highest. Here is a secret of a wholesome life which is well worth learning. We should seek for the best and the noblest in every one we meet, and then strive to call it out. One who was asked how to cultivate this charm of character replied, "Look at everything through kindly eyes." If we do this, there will be no more envy, no more jealousy, no more censoriousness, no more uncharitableness; having pure, generous love in our heart, we shall find in every other life something beautiful, at least something that through the kindly nourishing of our love may grow into beauty. Thus we shall really call on every nature for its best. This is a mark of supremest wholesomeness in life. It is thus that Christ's love looks on every one of us, seeing in us the best possibilities of our being, and calling ever for the best that is in us.

One other mark of wholesomeness in life is activity. Action is necessary to health; inaction produces death. Some one has said that the stars would rot in their orbits but for their unresting motion. The water that rests stagnates. One of the most prolific causes of unwholesomeness of life in all its phases is inaction. He was a wise physician who prescribed for a morbid, unhappy patient, "Do something for somebody." Most of the common doubts on religious questions which trouble people would be scattered to the winds if the doubter would go forth and begin to live out the teachings of Christ among suffering, sorrowing, and tempted people. The best thing to do for an unhappy Christian is to send him out to comfort or help some one in trouble.

Religion in the head and heart which finds no expression in the life soon grows unhealthy. The wholesome life must be always active. Exertion keeps the blood pure, and strengthens all the fibres of the being. There is a blessing, too, in doing, in helping others,

in making something beautiful. Work is a means of grace.

"Work for some good, be it ever so slowly;
Cherish some flower, be it ever so lowly;
Labor! all labor is noble and holy;
Let thy great deeds be thy prayer to thy God."

Thus a wholesome life is one of abounding moral and spiritual health, that lives according to the law of God, realizing the divine plan for it. Such a life is a benediction in the world. Its every touch is inspiration, and its every influence is fragrance.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUTY OF BEING STRONG.

"I asked for strength; for with the noontide heat
I fainted, while the reapers, singing sweet,
Went forward with ripe sheaves I could not bear.
Then came the Master, with his blood-stained feet,
And lifted me with sympathetic care.
Then on his arm I leaned till all was done;
And I stood with the rest at set of sun,
My task complete."

THERE is a duty of being strong. Strength is not a mere happy gift that falls to the lot of certain favored persons, while others are doomed to weakness. Never is weakness a duty. Over and over again in the Scriptures are men urged to be strong, but they are never urged to be weak. Weakness is never set down among the virtues, the beautiful things, the noble qualities of life. Everywhere are we urged to be strong. At the same time, no fact is oftener reiterated than that of human weakness. We belong

to an imperfect family. We tire easily. We faint under burdens. We are overcome by our sorrows. Life's struggles are too hard for us. We are bruised reeds, — not weak only, but crushed and wounded in our life.

Yet, while these painful facts are kept before us continually, a divine voice is ever heard sounding like a trumpet over the fields of battle and defeat, calling us to be strong. Strength is the ideal of a noble life. Victoriousness is the characteristic of a life of faith. Indeed, the only hope of blessedness is through overcoming. Heaven's heights lie beyond the plains of earthly struggle, and can be reached only by him who is strong and who overcometh.

If this were all of the Bible teaching on the subject, we might say that it is impossible for us to realize it. But there is more of the lesson. God will help us to be strong. "He giveth power to the faint." We are to be more than conquerors, not in ourselves, but in him who loves us. We are to be

strong "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." It is possible for us, in all our weakness and faintness, to receive strength from the divine fulness.

How to get this strength from God is therefore a practical question for us all. It comes to us in many ways. We may find it in a book whose words, as we read them, warm our hearts, and freshly inspire us for struggle or service. We may find it in a friendship whose companionship and helpfulness fill us with new courage and hope. Far more than we understand does God strengthen and bless us through human love. He hides himself in the lives of those who touch us with their affection. He looks into our eyes through human eyes, and speaks into our ears through human lips. He gives power to us in our faintness, and hope in our discouragement, through the friends who come to us with their love and cheer. The highest and greatest of all the comings of God to men was in a human life, when the Son of God tabernacled in the flesh. So, ever since, God is

coming to us in other human lives; yet often we do not recognize the love and the help as from him, because we see no glory blazing in the faces of the messengers.

The Bible tells us much about the ministry of angels in the olden days. They came with their messages of encouragement to weary or troubled ones. After our Lord's temptation, angels came and ministered to him in his faintness. In his agony in Gethsemane, an angel appeared, strengthening him. No doubt angels come now to minister to and strengthen God's children. There is a word which tells us that we ought not to forget to show love unto strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. This would seem to imply that angels come, sometimes at least, in human form. Mrs. Sangster gives this thought in her happy way in a little poem: —

In the old days God sent his angels oft
To men in threshing-floors, to women pressed
With daily tasks; they came to tent and croft,
And whispered words of blessing and of rest.

Not mine to guess what shape those angels wore,
Nor tell what voice they spoke, nor with what grace,
They brought the dear love down that evermore
Makes lowliest souls its best abiding place.

But in these days I know my angels well;
They brush my garments on the common way;
They take my hand, and very softly tell
Some bit of comfort in the waning day.

And though their angel names I do not ken,
Though in their faces human want I read;
They are God-given to this world of men,
God-sent to bless it in its hours of need.

Child, mother, dearest wife, brave hearts that take
The rough and bitter cross, and help us bear
Its heavy weight when strength is like to break;
God bless you each, our angels unaware.

God's strength is imparted also through his words of promise. You are in sorrow, and opening your Bible you read the assurance of divine love and comfort, — that God is your Father, that your sorrow is full of blessing, that all things work together for good to God's children. As you read, and believe what you read, and receive it as for you, there comes into your soul a new strength,

a strange calmness, a holy peace; and you are comforted.

Or some day you are discouraged, overwrought, vexed by cares, fretted by life's distractions, weary and faint from much burden-bearing. You sit down with your Bible, and God speaks to you in its words of cheer and hope; and as you ponder over the words, the weariness is gone, you feel yourself growing strong, hope revives, courage returns. The words of God with their divine assurances bring strength to fainting ones.

But there is something even better than this. God is a real person; and he comes into our life, if we will admit him, with his own love and strength. The teaching of the Bible is that there is an actual impartation of strength from God to his weak and weary children. This is not possible in human friendship. The best that we can give to others is cheer, encouragement, sympathy. A mother, with all her love and yearning for her child, cannot really give any of her strength to it in its weakness. This, how-

ever, Christ, as the manifestation of God, does to his friends in their faintness, actually imparting to them of his own life.

When a branch of a vine is hurt, bruised, broken, its life wasted, the vine pours of its abundant life into the wounded part, to replenish the loss and to heal the hurt. That is what Christ does. Virtue went out of him to heal the sick. Virtue comes from him always when the hand of faith touches the hem of his garment, and becomes life and strength in the spirit that is thus brought into vital relation with him. His strength is made perfect in weakness. The greater our need, the more of his grace will come to us. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

The essential thing is our being really united to Christ. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Waiting upon the Lord means trusting him implicitly and patiently, believing in his love, keeping near his heart, living in unbroken fellowship with him. True praying is waiting upon God. It brings the life up close to him, and from

his fulness flows the strength to fill our emptiness. One who goes to God in prayer with his weakness receives help and blessing. Trench's lines tell us this in a striking way: —

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence will avail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
What parchèd fields refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel; how weak! we rise; how full of power!

The simple teaching of the Bible is that as we abide in Christ, in unbroken fellowship, there flows from him to us, into our deepest lives, in continuous stream, strength according to our need. "My strength is made perfect in weakness." As the waters of the sea pour out into every bay or channel, pressing up into every slightest indentation along the shore, so God's strength flows into every life that is lived in him, filling all its emptiness.

This teaching gives us the secret of strength. It tells us how it is possible for us to be strong, though in ourselves we are so weak.

Indeed, so wonderful is the divine grace that each believer in Christ can say in truth, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Our very weakness becomes a blessing, because it makes room for the power of God, and this in us makes us strong. We never need faint nor fall, for our strength will be renewed as fast as it is used. We may go on with our work, with our struggle, with our doing and serving, never withholding what the duty of the moment demands, never sparing ourselves when the calls of love to God or to our fellows are upon us, sure that, waiting upon God, we shall receive all the strength we need.

"I said, This task is keen —
But even while I spake, thou, Love Divine,
Didst stand behind, and gently overlean
My drooping form, and, oh! what task had been
Too stern for feebleness with help of thine?
Spell thou this lesson with me line by line,
The sense is rigid, but the voice is dear;
Guide thou my hand within that hand of thine —
Thy wounded hand! until its tremblings take
Strength from thy touch, and even for thy sake
Trace out each character in outline clear."

One spoke the other day of the surprises of a great sorrow which had just been passed through. It was all surprises — for it was the first sorrow; but strangest of all was the surprise of grace which came to brighten the darkness, and to fill the loneliness with love. Some of it came through human affection — friends had brought wondrous warmth and tenderness. "I never knew I had so many friends until my bereavement came." Some of it came through words of divine comfort which had been read or heard a hundred times before, but which now, in the darkness, for the first time revealed their precious meaning. But besides these, and most wonderful of all, there came a strange blessing of heavenly peace, which seemed to fill the bereft hearts as with an unseen presence of love, pouring itself through all the home as a holy fragrance. Thus it is that they who wait on the Lord have their strength renewed in every need, in every sorrow.

There is one other secret of being strong which must not be overlooked in our study

of this subject, — we must be strong in our own heart. A great deal of weakness is unnecessary. Sometimes resignation is a virtue; it is so when the hand of God is upon us in such a way as to leave us no alternative. But very often resignation is not a virtue, but weakness rather, which drags down with it many a possibility of power. Many times what people imagine to be submission to the will of God is only surrender to weakness, when there is really no need for surrender.

Some one counsels us to rename our obstacles, opportunities, considering each as a gymnasium bar on which to try our strength. In this attitude toward hindrances, obstructions, burdens, and weakness itself, lies a wonderful secret of victoriousness. This spirit makes obstacles stepping-stones on which to climb upward. This is really an element of Christian faith. Believing that God will make us strong, we go on as if we were already strong, and as we move forward the strength comes.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLESSING OF SIMPLE GOODNESS.

It is not the deed we do,
  Though the deed be never so fair,
But the love that the dear Lord looketh for,
  Hidden with lowly care
  In the heart of the deed so fair.

Behold us, the rich and the poor,
  Dear Lord, in thy service draw near;
One consecrateth a precious coin,
  One droppeth only a tear;
  Look, Master, the love is here!

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

AFTER all, there are few ways in which most of us can do better service for Christ in this world than just by being good. Sir Walter Scott's farewell to Lockhart contained wise counsel: "Be a good man, my dear." Cleverness shines more brightly in society; eloquence makes itself heard more widely, and elicits huzzas from the throng; wealth yields a greater show of splendor, gives more worldly power for the time, and gets itself talked

about by more people; conspicuous almsgiving is more praised of men — it has its reward; but plain, simple goodness is likely to have as bright a crown and as high a place in heaven as any of her more showy sisters. It is certain, too, that nothing makes a deeper and more lasting impression on human lives; and this is the best test of the real value of living.

Of course no disparagement is cast on the active forms of Christian usefulness and service. There is a place for all of them, and all of them are needed to make the life of the world complete. Some must give their large gifts to build churches, asylums, and homes for the aged, the orphan, and the poor. Some must preach the gospel in eloquent words, to tell the lost of the great love of God, and the wonderful sacrifice of Jesus Christ for men's salvation. Some must lead in the service of praise, and fulfil the rich ministry of song. There is a place in God's church for the fullest exercise of every form of gift, — the finest, the most brilliant, and

the most conspicuous. Those who have been endowed with qualities for public service, or for doing the great things of the kingdom, are highly favored of God — and as their gifts are, so is their responsibility.

But even in the case of those who serve the world in these active ways, it is the quiet influence of personality that gives to acts and service their greatest value. What a man is measures the worth of what he does. His character means more as a factor in his usefulness than do his deeds.

> "No good is certain but the steadfast mind,
> The undivided will to seek the good;
> 'Tis that compels the elements, and wrings
> A human music from the indifferent air.
> The greatest gift a hero leaves his race
> Is to have been a hero."

But meanwhile there is the multitude not gifted for great things — the one-talented or two-talented people, who think they can be of but little use in the world. Too often their temptation is to repeat the mistake and sin of the man in the parable, who thought

his one talent too small to be used to any profit. But the truth is, no life's endowment is too small to become a real blessing in this world. Even the smallest candle or taper will shed a little brightness, if lighted and set where it can shine. A match may light, in the lighthouse tower, the great lamp whose beams will flash far out to sea, showing vessels their way. Even a single drop of water may refresh a drooping plant or moisten a fevered lip.

But there is yet another kind of power for good which comes, not from any doing, even of little things, but from simple being. Though it were true of any that they could not help others by deeds of love, even the smallest, yet there are none who may not learn to live a life of constant helpfulness through the influence that goes out from them. A flower yields no timber to the builder for house or ship, and the utilitarian would say it is of no use. The one-talented man of the parable would say it might as well be buried. Yet we all know that the flower has a ministry

of being, if not of doing. In its own humble, silent way it is a great blessing.

"Flowers preach to us, if we will hear.
The rose saith in the dewy morn:
I am most fair;
Yet all my loveliness is born
Upon a thorn.
The poppy saith amid the corn:
Let but my scarlet head appear
And I am held in scorn;
Yet juice of subtle virtues lies
Within my cup of curious dyes.
The lilies say: Behold how we
Preach, without words, of purity.
The violets whisper from the shade
Which their own leaves have made:
Men scent our fragrance on the air,
Yet take no heed
Of humble lessons we would read.

But not alone the fairest flowers;
The merest grass
Along the roadside where we pass,
Lichen and moss and sturdy weed,
Tell of His love, who sends the dew,
The rain and sunshine too,
To nourish one small seed."

So it is with the ministry of simple goodness in a human life. Suppose we are right

in saying that we cannot do anything in Christ's church; that we have no working gifts, and that we have no money to contribute — it does not follow that we can be of no use whatever. We can at least be good. We can get into our hearts the grace of the Lord Jesus, the mind that was in Christ Jesus. We can become so filled with the Holy Spirit that the light of divine love will shine out from our dull nature, and transfigure it. We can have something of the beauty of Christ in our life. This will make us sweet-tempered and gentle-spirited. It will make us honest in our dealings with our fellow-men. It will make us kind to all about us. It will make us good people to live with at home — as wife or husband, as brother or sister, as parent or child. It will make us good neighbors and faithful friends. The unconscious ministry of such a life through long years will leave untold blessings in this world. The words dropped in the commonest intercourse will become inspirations to others.

"A nameless man, amid a crowd
That thronged the daily mart,
Let fall a word of hope and love
Unstudied from the heart.

A whisper on the tumult thrown,
A transitory breath,
It raised a brother from the dust;
It saved a soul from death."

The light of good cheer that shines in our face as we pass victoriously through the hard things of our condition puts hope into other discouraged hearts. The faith that fails not when things seem dark, that meets sorrow and suffers, but is not crushed, helps the faith of others who are in like experiences. Life is contagious. Courage in one struggler makes all others who know him braver. Joy in one spirit kindles joy in many other spirits. The ministry of influence is silent, but it never intermits. By day and by night it goes on, while men wake and while they sleep. Even death does not interrupt it; but when the voice is hushed, when the hands are folded, it continues to bless and inspire others.

Not long since in a great city an aged Christian woman closed her earthly life. She had lived always in very plain circumstances. She had enjoyed only the most ordinary privileges of education. She had no peculiar gift for any distinct form of Christian activity. She had never taught a Sunday-school class, nor led a woman's prayer-meeting, nor taken part in a missionary society, nor been connected with a temperance union or any other sort of organized association. She had never been recognized by her friends as an active worker in any capacity. But for sixty of her eighty years she had been a true, earnest, and sincere Christian. She had been a faithful wife, and a loving, self-denying mother. She had brought up her family in the fear of the Lord. She had lived a quiet, patient, gentle life.

About her coffin there sat a large circle of her descendants, — her own children and grandchildren. Her life-story was a record, not of any great deeds, nor of any fine things done, but of eighty years of plain, simple, lowly, Christlike goodness. Yet it never can

be known until the Judgment Day, when the books shall be opened, what blessings that humble life left at its close in the world. Its silent, unconscious influence poured out through all the long years into other lives, making them better, happier, holier, sweeter.

Such a ministry of goodness is within the reach of every Christian. It requires no brilliant gifts, no great wealth. It is a ministry which the plainest and lowliest may fulfil. Then its influence is incalculable.

The church in these days of fashionable worldliness needs just such simple goodness. It has eloquence in its pulpits, and activity in its pews; but it needs more good people filled with the spirit of Christ, repeating the life of Christ wherever they move. Of such Christians it may be said, as one said recently of a young Christian whose quiet life had realized this conception of goodness: "Wherever she went lovely flowers sprung up in her path, and the air was sweeter when she had passed by."

CHAPTER VI.

LIVING UP TO OUR PRIVILEGES.

Ever toward man's height of nobleness
Strive still some new progression to contrive,
Till, just as any other friend's, we press
Death's hand; and, having died, feel none the less
How beautiful it is to be alive.

HENRY SEPTIMUS SUTTON.

THERE is no doubt that we live below our privileges as Christians. Our privileges are glorious. No vision of life we can conceive of can be so exalted, so noble, so divine, as is the actual life of one who is a child of God. It is impossible to paint its possibilities in colors too bright. Because the glories of the spiritual life are not earthly, and therefore do not appeal to our physical senses, it is not easy for us to realize their value and importance. But truly to be "partakers of the divine nature," to be "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," is

to have the highest honor possible to a human life.

It is not possible that we can fully know the value of our privileges in the present life. However much we may see of our inheritance, there are treasures in it yet undiscovered by us, and undiscoverable here. However deep the joy which our hearts may experience, there must ever remain other depths unexplored until we enter the larger life of heaven. However lofty our attainments may be, we can at best only begin in this world to reach the excellences of spirit which belong to our perfected character. Yet it is our duty to gather into our life all that we can receive. At many points, therefore, we may reach after the better things that are ours.

For one thing, we do not find the best things there are in the Bible, and may press our quest ever farther. The finest gold lies deep, and has to be digged for. It is hidden in the rocks, and has to be quarried out. We can never get the best the Bible has to give us, until we learn to search through its chap-

ters as the miner searches with pick and hammer, with shovel and lamp, in the dark mines, for the precious treasure that is concealed there. Another condition of finding the richest things in the Scriptures is that we take them into our life as fast as we discover them. The words of God are meant to be eaten and assimilated as food. They are meant to be accepted for obedience, for guidance, for trust, for comfort. It is only when we thus receive them that they open, and yield to us their treasures of blessing.

One of the secrets of a strong Christian life is daily feeding upon the word of God. The Bible contains God's bread for God's children. Bible-fed Christians are godlike men and women. It is great thinking that produces great character, and he who makes the Bible his daily meditation learns to think over God's thoughts.

We are not getting the best we might get from our praying. It was the Master who said, "Enter into thy closet," and "shut thy door," and "pray to thy Father which is in

secret." It is in the closet that we get our life renewals. There we may open our heart to God. We never can speak the things of our innermost life in public prayer. Secret prayer is the communing of the individual soul with God. Here it is that godly men and women get their shining faces, the light that breaks through their tears, the strength that makes them victorious in temptation, the power that fits them for Christian work and Christlike serving. The closet of prayer is the holy of holies of each Christian life. The blessing we may receive there is simply immeasurable. One writes: —

All empty handed came I in; full handed forth I go;
Go thou beside me, Lord of grace, and keep me ever so.
Thanks are poor things for such wide good; but all my life is thine;
Thou hast turned my stones to bread, my water into wine.

We do not get the best possible out of our church-life. The church brings heaven down to earth. It keeps alive in this world the

love, the grace, the beauty, of God. Our Sabbaths are oases where we may drink of the pure water that flows from the heavenly mountains, and eat of the fruits that grow on the trees of God, and thus be prepared to go out into the world for a six days' journey over the hot sands.

Some years since a party of Americans were about to leave Cairo for a journey across the desert. Before setting out, they bought vessels in which to carry water. Each one chose the kind of vessel that pleased him. One found jars of brass, whose fine designs attracted him. Another purchased porcelain vessels of rare beauty. A third, however, took some plain earthenware bottles. The way across the desert was long and wearisome. The heat was intense. Every drop of water was of value. The brass vessels heated; and the water was made impure, and unfit for use. The costly porcelain jugs cracked in the heat, and the water was lost. But the plain earthenware bottles kept the water pure and sweet until the journey was ended.

We go out every morning to trudge over desert paths. We should be sure that on the Sabbath we make preparation that shall not fail us on the journey. Mere idle rest will not give it to us. We cannot get it from the Sunday newspaper, from the latest novel, from mere literary books, or from studying works of art. But if we turn our face to God's house on God's day, and commune with him, filling our earthenware vessels of faith and love with the water of life, we shall not faint by the way.

The things we get from the church are the lasting things. Other things are but of the passing day, and have no reality in them. Nothing is emptier than the applause which men's worldly success wins on the streets or in the newspapers. The huzzas of to-day may be changed to sneers to-morrow. But the blessing that comes to those who truly worship God is lasting. One writes of listening to the brawl of London streets and of Parliament houses until he grew weary and sick of the emptiness. Then he went out of the

city to watch the darkening evening, and to seek the touch of the sweet airs of heaven. He writes: —

"Half a mile on, a sudden song,
Mounting above in a girl's sweet breath,
Brought me to pause, and I caught the words,
'Victory, victory over death!'
From a little chapel so deep in green,
The psalm was heard ere the place was seen.
'These be the things that last,' I said.
Shadows we are that shadows pursue,
Triumph and weep over vanities,
Strut and fret and make much ado.
Verily, Christ, as he did say,
'Is with two or three who meet to pray.'
So, while the people sang and prayed,
'These be the things that endure,' I said."

We need the help which we can get from the church. It is never easy to live in this world, even at the best. In the quietest day there are cares which tend to fret us and break our peace. Business has its temptations; and it is hard always to live out Christ's teachings in our shops, stores, and offices. Home life, with its household tasks and its cares and anxieties, wears heavily on the

heart's sensitiveness. To many of us every common day brings discouragements, disheartenments, and ofttimes sorrows. But it is possible to get into our soul in God's house such inspiring hopes, such uplifting joys, that all the week, in the dust and toil, heavenly songs shall sing in our bosom. We rob our life of blessings which belong to it by right when we fail to use the privileges which the church brings within our reach. Too many of us fail to understand this. Some Christian people set such small store by their church that they are kept from its services for the lightest reasons. Others fail to get from its services and its fellowships the divine cheer, inspiration, and strength which they might get. The possible helpfulness in a true church relationship is beyond estimate.

We do not make the most and the best possible of our life in the work of Christ. The possibilities of Christian service are incalculable. For example, the influence which a true home exerts on its inmates is beyond measure. A Christian man who had long

been engaged in useful service tells of a visit to his old childhood home. He was put to sleep in the spare room. He opened a closet door, and a scene was before him which brought a rush of tears to his eyes. An old chair stood there, and before it lay a cushion in which were deep knee-prints. Evidently this was some one's closet of prayer. Instantly the truth flashed upon him. He was looking into the secret sanctuary of his beloved mother, where she had prayed all her children into the kingdom of Christ. He saw now the place where the grace was invoked by intercession which had brought the power of Christ into his own heart. What a holy place it was!

What would be the result if every Christian home in the world had such a holy of holies, its old chair daily wet with tears of love, and its cushion deeply indented by suppliant knees?

Then in countless other lines do opportunities of usefulness and helpfulness open to earnest Christians. Saying nothing of the formal Christian work in which many may engage,

every day's life is full of occasions where good may be done by simple deeds, or words of kindness. The value of these unpurposed things is very great. We may live all day and every day so that each step of our path shall be brightened by love. The world needs our love all the while. We meet no one from morning till night whom we may not help in some little way at least. It is possible for us to make a good deal more than most of us do of these opportunities for service of love.

Every individual Christian is the centre of a circle whose hearts he may touch with a benediction of love. He is a custodian of blessing which he is to impart to others. The noblest life is the one that is given up most unselfishly to serving.

It is interesting to think what kind of a Christian one would be who should realize all the possibilities of faith in Christ, and truly find the best things in all life's ways. It certainly is our privilege and our duty to make all we can of the opportunities we have. Ever before us shines the ideal, always unreached,

and ever calling us to better things. Though we may not hope to attain its full beauty, we should ever press toward it in faith and hope and love. Each day of such striving will bring us a little nearer to it, and at last, when we break through the wall into the life beyond, we shall realize it. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

"Something I may not win attracts me ever —
Something elusive, yet supremely fair,
Thrills me with gladness, yet contents me never,
Fills me with sadness, yet forbids despair.

It blossoms just beyond the paths I follow,
It shines beyond the farthest stars I see;
It echoes faint from ocean caverns hollow,
And from the land of dreams it beckons me.

It calls, and all my best, with joyful feeling,
Essays to reach it as I make reply;
I feel its sweetness o'er my spirit stealing,
Yet know ere I attain it I must die."

CHAPTER VII.

THE LESSON OF SERVICE.

We can best minister to Him by helping them
Who dared not touch his hallowed garment's hem.
Their lives are even as ours — one piece, one plan.
Him we know not, him shall we never know
Till we behold him in the least of these
Who suffer or who sin. In sick souls he
Lies bound and sighing; asks our sympathies;
Their grateful eyes thy benison bestow,
Brother and Lord, — "Ye did it unto me."

LUCY LARCOM.

JESUS taught that we should live, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." This is a lesson that it is very hard to learn. It is easy enough to utter sentimental platitudes about the nobleness of service, but no one can truly live after this heavenly pattern until his being is saturated with the divine Spirit.

Just what is the lesson that our Lord sets us we should try definitely to understand. It is, in a word, so to relate ourselves to others that our chief thought concerning them shall

be, not how we may get pleasure, profit, honor, or advancement from them for ourselves, but how we may give them pleasure, do them good, or put honor upon them. If we have this spirit, we shall see in every person who comes within the circle of our life one to whom we owe love and service.

God has so ordered that we cannot love and serve him, and not also love and serve our fellow-men. Jesus made this very plain in his picture of the last judgment, when he said that he is hungry in every hungry little one of his; that he is sick in every least one of his who is sick; that in the stranger who comes to our door he stands before us, waiting for the hospitality of love. In serving his, we are serving him; in neglecting his, we neglect him. We cannot fulfil our duty by loving Christ and serving him, while we ignore our fellow-men. He accepts no such service. If we say we love him, he points to the needy, the hungry, the sick, the burdened ones, the suffering all about us, and says: "Show your love to these. I do not need

service now, but these need it. Serve them in my name. Look at each one of them as if I were myself the one in pain or need, and do for these, my brethren, just what you would do for me if I were actually in their condition." We cannot get away from this relationship to Christ. It binds us to every other life. To act selfishly toward any one is to act selfishly toward Christ. To neglect any one who needs our help is to neglect Christ himself. To do good to any other in Christ's name is to serve Christ.

If only we understood that Christ himself is with us still and always, not only in his spiritual presence, but in the person of every needy or suffering one who belongs to him, it would transform all life for us, putting glory into the commonest lives, and the splendor of angel service into the lowliest ministry. How sacred it would make all life if we saw Christ in every one who comes to us in any need! We wish sometimes that we had lived when Jesus was here, and we say we would have served him most sweetly and lovingly. Would

we? Mrs. Margaret E. Preston has taught us a needed lesson in one of her poems: —

"If I had dwelt" — so mused a tender woman,
All fine emotions stirred
Through pondering o'er that Life, divine yet human,
Told in the sacred word —
"If I had dwelt of old, a Jewish maiden,
In some Judean street,
Where Jesus walked, and heard his word so laden
With comfort strangely sweet;
And seen the face, where utmost pity blended
With each rebuke of wrong, —
I would have left my lattice and descended,
And followed with the throng.

"Foxes have holes" — methinks my heart had broken
To hear the words so said,
While Christ had not — were sadder words e'er spoken? —
A place to lay his head!
I would have flung abroad my doors before him,
And in my joy have been
First on the threshold, eager to adore him,
And crave his entrance in!"

Ah! would you so? Without a recognition
You passed him yesterday;
Jostled aside, unhelped, his mute petition,
And calmly went your way,
With warmth and comfort, garmented and girdled.
Before your window-sill

Sad crowds swept by — and if your blood is curdled,
You wear your jewels still.
You catch aside your robes lest want should clutch them
In its imploring wild;
Or lest some penitent might touch them,
And you be thus defiled.
Oh! dreamer, dreaming that your faith is keeping
All service free from blot,
Christ daily walks your streets, sick, suffering, weeping,
And you perceive him not!"

This teaching invests every life with a sacredness to disregard which is a sacrilege. We must look upon every one as if he were the Christ. We dare not pass by any one carelessly. We know not to whom we may have a duty of love. The stranger whom mere seeming chance brings into our presence for an hour may have been sent to us that in some way we may serve him. We are always safe in assuming that we have an errand to every one we meet. We need not announce our mission, and we must never display officiousness in the discharge of our duty of love. We need only to hold ourselves in readiness, with all of love's humility, alacrity, and gentleness,

to do whatever heart or hand may find to do in serving him. Our duty to him may be nothing more than the showing of a kindly spirit in our manner, the giving of a hearty salutation, or the inspiration of a cheerful countenance. But however small the service may be which it is ours to render, it is a divine ministry, and its value to the person we never may know.

Nothing is small that helps a human life. The Koran tells of the sending of Gabriel to the earth to keep Solomon from some sin, and at the same time to help a little toiling ant to get home with its burden. The latter service was as angelic as the former. No ministry on which God sends us can be considered small.

No mere theoretical acknowledgment of this universal obligation of man to man will avail. Fine sentiment is not enough; we must get the sentiment into practical life. We must bring our visions down out of ethereal mists into something substantial and real. We must let the love of our heart flow out in life and

act and helpful ministry. Stern old Cromwell showed good common-sense when, seeing some silver statues in dusty niches, and learning that they were the twelve apostles, he gave orders that they be taken down, converted into money, and sent out to do good. That is what we should do with our fine professions of brotherly love. Brotherly love has no right to pose forever in mere creed and sentiment; there is something far better for it to do. In this world in which there are so much need, sorrow, and heart-hunger, it has a holy mission everywhere. If we would be Christlike, we must, like our Master, go about doing good.

A little child is said once to have closed her prayer on a winter evening in this way: "I saw a little girl on the street this afternoon; and she was cold and barefooted; but it isn't any of our business, is it, God?" She was only more honest in her prayer than some older persons; for many people certainly act as if they regarded it as none of their business, when they see their fellow-men suffering and in need. But the teaching of Christ shows that

it is our business, that we are under obligation to love and serve all men. We are debtor to every man; we may not owe him money, but we owe him love, and love means whatsoever help he needs, — bread for his hunger, or sympathy and cheer in his trial and struggle.

If we but look at people always in this way, we shall find ourselves asking concerning every one we meet: "How can I be a help to this person? What does God want me to do for him?" We certainly have some errand of love to every one who crosses our path. To busy men the interruptions of frequent callers are trying, especially when the callers have no particular errand. There is apt to be a strong temptation to treat the visitors impatiently, almost rudely. We are in the midst of important duties, and the time is all too brief in which to finish what we must do before nightfall. Certainly we have no right to waste our time with any such interrupters, devastators of time, as some one calls them.

Yet doubtless we have an errand to each and every such caller. We owe him at least

a kindly greeting, a pleasant word. To treat him rudely, and turn him away as if he were a dog, is to insult Christ himself. Perhaps we cannot do for him what he wants us to do, but we can at least treat him kindly. People with sad, discouraged hearts need love more than they need money. We do not read that Jesus ever gave money to any poor person whom he saw; but he did give to every one something far better than money. No one ever came to him with any real need and went away unblessed. We may always treat in the same way those who come to us. Without losing many seconds of time, we may send our visitor from us with a lighter heart, and with a little new hope in his breast to strengthen him for the struggle of his life that goes on forever.

All about us are those who are forever in need of love's ministry. For many people life is very hard. Some traveller speaks of the great stretches of the lava-fields for miles around a volcano, and of the desolateness and dreariness of the paths over those fields. There was not a blade of grass, nor a shrub,

nor the tiniest living thing anywhere to be seen. But here and there as he went on, he saw, in the cracks and crevices of the lava-beds, little flowers growing; and flowers never before seemed so lovely, even in finest garden or conservatory, as there amid the bleakness. Like those walks across the lava-fields are the paths of many in this world, with their hard toil, bitter sorrow, and heavy burden-bearing; and like the lovely little flowers that so cheered the traveller in those desolate regions are the human kindnesses which here and there come, with their sweet fragrance and cheer, into these dreary lives.

We have it in our power to put untold gladness and help into the lives that every day touch ours. We can do it by learning this divine lesson of service, and by regarding every person we meet as one to whom we are sent on an errand of love. This attitude toward others will put an end to all supercilious pride and haughtiness. We shall no more set ourselves up on little pedestals of self-conceit, demanding homage from others; rather, like our

Master, we shall stand with basin and towel, ready to wash the feet of the lowliest. We shall no more think ourselves too good to perform the humblest ministries to the humblest, but shall consider it the highest honor to do the things that are least; for Jesus has said he is chiefest who serves the most.

"Lord, make us all love all, that when we meet
Even myriads of earth's myriads at thy bar,
We may be glad as all true lovers are
Who, having parted, count reunion sweet,
Safe gathered home around thy blessed feet;
Come home by different roads from near or far,
Whether by whirlwind or by flaming car,
From pangs or sleep, safe folded round thy seat.
O, if our brother's blood cry out to us,
How shall we meet thee who hast loved us all,
Thee whom we never loved, not loving him?
The unloving cannot chant with seraphim,
Bear harp of gold or palm victorious,
Or face the vision beatifical."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GRACE OF THOUGHTFULNESS.

"In life — not death,
Hearts need fond words to help them on their way;
Need tender thoughts and gentle sympathy,
Caresses, pleasant looks, to cheer each passing day.
Then hoard them not until they useless be;
In life — not death,
Speak kindly. Living hearts need sympathy."

"I DIDN'T think," is what people say oft-times when they suddenly become aware of the pain which some heedless act or careless word of theirs has given to a gentle heart. Too often our thoughtfulness is an afterthought; the problem is to get it to its true place, where it will become motive and inspiration to gentleness, instead of pain and penitence over a failure in love's duty. It is infinitely better that thoughtfulness should strew our friends' path with flowers than that regret should pile exaggerated floral offerings on their

coffins. We would do well to get our kindnesses done while they will do good, giving cheer and encouragement, and not keep them back till there is no need for them. It ought to be possible to get the grace of thoughtfulness into our life, as part of our spiritual culture, even in early years.

No doubt much evil is wrought by want of thought. Many people with kindly heart continually cause pain to others by mere heedlessness. They seem to have no perception of the sensibilities of those about them. They have never trained themselves to think at all of others in connection with their own words and acts. They have accustomed themselves to think only of their own pleasure, and to say and do only what their own impulses prompt, without asking whether others will be pleased or displeased. They think only of their own comfort and convenience, and never of how the thing they wish to do may break into the comfort or convenience of others.

We find abundant illustration of this in all our common life. The intercourse of many

homes is marred and spoiled by exhibitions of this thoughtless spirit. Family life should be a blending of all the tastes, dispositions, talents, gifts, and resources of all the members of the household. In each one there should be self-restraint. No member may live in a home circle as if he were dwelling alone in a great house, with only himself to consider. He must repress much in himself for the sake of the other members. He must do many things which he might not do if he were alone, because he is a member of a little community, whose happiness and good he is to seek at every point. No household life can ever be made truly ideal by all having always their own way.

But many persons who are tied up in family life forget this. They expect to live as regardlessly of others as if they were living alone. They consider no one's comfort, peace, or pleasure but their own. They let their own impulses have full and free expression. They make no effort to repress any elements or dispositions in themselves which tend to

give pain to others. They demand all their rights, not remembering that the other members of the family have rights too, and that home happiness can be secured only by the mutual surrender of rights, each in honor preferring the others, each seeking not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

This exacting spirit leads to continual thoughtlessness. Thoughtfulness is thinking of others, and modifying one's conduct so as to avoid whatever would give trouble, inconvenience, or hurt to others. A child had a beautiful canary bird. From morning till night it sang, and its song filled all the house. But the child's mother was ill — so ill that even the singing of the bird, which to the boy was such delicious music, disturbed and distressed her. He put it into a part of the house as far away as possible from the sick-room, thinking that the sound could not reach his mother's ears. But the shrill singing still came into the room, and pained the weak invalid.

One morning, as the child stood holding

his mother's hand, the bird began to sing, and the notes came into the chamber very faintly; and yet as he watched the sufferer's face, he saw an expression of pain sweep over it. She said nothing, but the boy needed no words to tell him that the bird's singing was distressing her. "It is no music to me," he said, "if it pains my mother." So he took the cage, and, carrying it away, gave the bird to a friend. "But you loved the bird," his mother said, when she learned what he had done. "Yes," he replied; "but I love you more."

That was a beautiful thing to do. It told of true thoughtfulness in the child. His personal pleasure must be sacrificed because gratifying it gave pain to one who was dear to him. This is the spirit which should characterize every one. We should repress in ourselves the tastes which are not agreeable to our friends. We should cut off the habits which hurt the sensitive hearts whose happiness is dear to us. We should put away the things in us, whatever the cost may be, which give pain to our loved ones.

This spirit will lead us to regard the feelings of others with most gentle care. If one is lying ill in our home, it will make us quiet in our movements through the house, that we may not disturb the sick one. If a friend is in any trouble, it will make us kindly in all our treatment of him. If one has some weakness or deformity, it will make us guard against any allusion to the defect or disfigurement, which would give mortification to the unfortunate person.

Some people seem to have a genius for making others miserable. They are continually touching sensitive hearts so as to cause pain. They are always saying things which sting and irritate. If you have any bodily defect, they never see you without in some rude way making you conscious of it. If any relative or friend of yours has done some dishonorable thing, they seem to take a cruel delight in constantly referring to it when speaking with you. They lack all delicacy of feeling, having no eye for the things in others which demand gentleness of treatment.

Thoughtfulness is the reverse of all this. It simply does not do the things which thoughtlessness does. It avoids the painful subject. It never alludes to a man's clubfoot or humpback, nor ever casts an eye at the defect, nor does anything to direct attention to it or to make the man conscious of it. It respects your sorrow, and refrains from rudely touching your wound. It has the utmost kindliness of feeling and expression. Some one defines a gentleman as one who never gives pain to another. This is the true definition of thoughtfulness.

Then, there is also an active side. No grace is altogether negative. Thoughtfulness does not merely keep one from doing thoughtless things; it also leads to continued acts of kindness and good will. It watches ever for opportunities to give pleasure and happiness. It does not wait to be asked for sympathy or help, but has eyes of its own, and sees every need, and supplies it unsolicited. When a friend is in sorrow, the thoughtful man is ready with his proffer of comfort.

He does not come next day, when the need is past, but is prompt with his kindness when kindness means something. Thoughtfulness is always doing little kindnesses. There are many good people who seem never to find any good thing to do for another. Opportunities come to them in unbroken succession, through all the days, but they see them not till they are past and gone. Thoughtfulness, on the other hand, has an instinct for seeing the little things that need to be done, and then for doing them.

The secret of all this is that people can see about them only what they have in their own heart. One who has birds in his mind sees birds on every bush. One who is looking for flowers will see flowers everywhere. A heart full of sympathy and love will see in others, on even the commonest days, a thousand things which need to be done. One who is thinking of others' comfort and good will never lack occasions for doing the things that give comfort and do good.

There are some rare spirits who seem born

for thoughtfulness. They have a genius for sympathy. Instinctively they seem to understand the experiences of pain in others, and from their heart there flows always a blessing of tenderness which is full of healing. This is the highest and holiest ministry of love. It is not softness nor weakness; it is strength, but strength enriched by divine gentleness. Not all love possesses this crowning quality. There is love that is heedless, and lacks the fine sense of others' feelings which is needed to make it perfect in its helpfulness.

"Not unto every heart is God's good gift
Of simple tenderness allowed; we meet
With love in many fashions when we lift
First to our lips life's waters bitter-sweet.
Love comes upon us with resistless power
Of curbless passion, and with headstrong will!
It plays around like April's breeze and shower,
Or calmly flows, a rapid stream and still;
It comes with blessedness into the heart
That welcomes it aright, or — bitter fate! —
It rings the bosom with so fierce a smart,
That love, we cry, is crueller than hate.
And then, ah me, when love has ceased to bless,
Our hearts cry out for tenderness!

We long for tenderness like that which hung
About us lying on our mother's breast.
. . . . . .
In youth's brief heyday hottest love we seek,
The reddest rose we grasp; but when it dies,
God grant that later blossoms, violets meek,
May spring for us beneath life's autumn skies!
God grant that some dear loving one be near to bless
Our weary way with simple tenderness."

Thoughtfulness is one of the truest and best tests of a fine character. Thoughtlessness is rudeness, boorishness. It is selfishness, cold-heartedness. It is unrefined. It is cruel and unkind. Thoughtfulness is refined. It is love working in all delicate ways. It is unselfishness which forgets itself, and thinks only of others. It is love which demands not to be served, to be honored, to be helped, but thinks continually of serving and honoring others. Thoughtlessness is "want of heart," and he who has a gentle heart cannot but be thoughtful. Love is always thoughtful.

In older days, in sermons and in prayers, much reference was made to sins as divided into those of omission and those of commis-

sion. In the confession of sins in the service of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the worshipper acknowledges that he has left undone the things he ought to have done. Perhaps we give altogether too little attention to our sins of omission. We may think we are living fairly well because we do not commit grave and flagrant errors and sins; but how about the other side of our life? Are we doing the thousand acts of kindness which warm love would prompt? Do not the weary and the heart-hungry and the tempted and the struggling and the needy pass by us continually, with their silent appeals to us for what we have to give them, yet pass by in vain? Here is one phase of thoughtfulness which in many of us needs culture. Marion Harland writes: —

I might have said a word of cheer
Before I let him go.
His weary visage haunts me yet;
But how could I foreknow
The slighted chance would be the last
To me in mercy given?
My utmost yearnings cannot send
That word from earth to heaven.

I might have looked the love I felt;
My brother had sore need
Of that for which — too shy and proud —
He lacked the speech to plead.
But self is near, and self is strong,
And I was blind that day
He sought within my careless eyes
And went, athirst, away.

I might have held in closer clasp
The hand he laid in mine;
The pulsing warmth of my rich life
Had been as generous wine,
Swelling a stream that, even then,
Was ebbing faint and slow.
Mine might have been (God knows) the art
To stay the fatal flow.

O, word and look and clasp withheld!
O, brother-heart, now stilled!
Dear life, forever out of reach,
I might have warmed and filled!
Talents misused and seasons lost,
O'er which I mourn in vain —
A waste as barren to my tears
As desert sands to rain!

Ah, friend! whose eyes to-day may look
Love into living eyes,
Whose tone and touch, perchance, may thrill
Sad hearts with sweet surprise;

Be instant, like our Lord, in love,
And lavish as his grace,
With light and dew and manna-fall,
For night comes on apace.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEEDS WE ARE SCATTERING.

"I dropped a seed beside a path,
And went my busy way,
Till chance, or fate — I say not which —
Led me one summer day
Along the selfsame path; and lo!
A flower blooming there,
As fair as eye hath looked upon,
And sweet as it was fair."

We are all sowers. We are all the while scattering seeds. Our own life and the lives of others about us are the fields in which we drop the seeds.

When a baby is born, its life is only a patch of soil in which, as yet, nothing is growing. A mother's hand is the first to plant seeds there — in the looks of tender love which her eyes dart into the child's soul, in her smiles and caresses and croonings, and her thousand efforts to reach the child's heart and wake up its powers; and then in the les-

sons which she teaches. All the members of the household soon become sowers also on this field, as the life begins to open, every one dropping some embryo into the mellow soil.

Hands outside the home in a little while begin to scatter seeds in mind and heart. The street, the playground, the school; later, books, papers, and pictures contribute their portion. As the years advance, the experiences of life — temptations, tasks, trials, joys, sorrows — bring their influences; and thus the character of the mature man is the growth of seeds sown by a thousand hands in the life from infancy.

All our thoughts, words, and acts are seeds. They have in them a quality which makes them grow where they fall, reproducing themselves. This is true of the good we do. The mother's teachings enter the mind and heart of her child as mere germs; but they reappear in the life of the son or daughter, in later years, in strength and beauty, in nobleness of character, and in usefulness of

life. Not only is this strange power in the mother's words; her acts, her habits, her tones of voice, the influences that go forth from her life, are also seeds, having in them a vital principle. Where they lodge, they grow. You never can lose your mother. She may die, and her body may be borne out of your sight, and laid away in God's acre. You will see her face and hear her voice no more; no more will her hand scatter the good seeds of truth and love upon your life's garden. But you have not lost her. Your mind and heart are full of the seeds which fell from her hand along the years. These you never can lose. No hand of death can root them out of your life. They have grown into the very tissues of your character. They reappear in your habits, your dispositions, your feelings and opinions, your modes of thought, your very phrases and forms of speech. You never can lose your mother; the threads of her life are woven inextricably into your life.

The same is true of the forth-puttings of

every life. The good things that fall from your hands, as you go along the way, are seeds, and will not die. The gentle poet found his song from beginning to end, long, long after he had sung it, in the heart of his friend. The song had not lain there along the years, a mere melody of musical words remembered, like a piece of gold wrapped in a napkin, kept safe and undimmed; all the while it had been a thing of life in the friend's heart. The influence of its sweet thought had been like a holy perfume in the friend's soul, pouring out into every nook and cranny, permeating all his spirit. So it is with whatever good things we do, with the true words we speak, with the faithful example we show, with all the influences of our life that are Christlike. They are living seeds. They will not fall into the ground and perish. They will stay where they drop, and you will find them again after many days.

Not only will they stay; they will germinate and grow, and yield a harvest. Faber has

said: "When men do anything for God, — the very least thing, — they never can know where it will end, nor what amount of work it will do for him." Go on doing the little things, no matter how small, only making sure that you breathe love into them. Let them fall where they may, no matter into what heart, no matter how silently, no matter how hopeless may seem the soil into which they drop, no matter how you yourself may appear to be forgotten or overlooked as you do your deeds of kindness, and speak your words of love. These words and deeds and influences of yours are living seeds, and not one of them shall perish.

> "I dropped a sympathetic word,
> Nor stayed to watch it grow,
> For little tending's needed when
> The seed is good we sow;
> But once I met the man again,
> And by the gladsome way
> He took my hand, I knew I sowed
> The best of seed that day."

The same is true, however, of the evil things we do. They, too, have in them the

quality of life and reproductiveness. If our good things only were seeds, this truth would have unmingled encouragement for us. But it is startling to remember that the same law applies to the evil things. The man who writes a bad book, or paints an unholy picture, or sings an impure song, sets in motion a procession of unholy influences which will go on forever. He, too, will find his evil words again in the hearts of men, long, long afterwards, or see his unclean picture reproduced on men's lives, or hear his unholy song singing itself over again in the depths of men's being.

The evil that men do lives after them. "Bury my influence in my grave with me," said a wicked man, dying with bitter remorse in his soul. But that is impossible. Sometimes men who have been sowing evil wake up to the consciousness of the hurt they have been giving to other lives, and go over their paths, trying to gather up the seeds of sin which they have cast into human hearts; but the effort is unavailing, as no one can take

out of men's minds and hearts the seeds of evil he has dropped there.

We ought to lay this truth seriously to heart, and remember it continually. If we did, it would make us more faithful while we live. We are apt to speak heedless words, whose influence is not good, and to do things which touch other lives and do not leave blessing. There are many people moving these days among the debased, — fallen, we call them, — fallen from purity, from honesty, from sobriety. We should never forget that all of these were once innocent, unstained, unfallen; and that there was a first yielding to temptation, and a first tempter. Somebody offered the boy the first drink. It seemed a little thing, but the act was a seed; and if you would see its harvest, look at the poor, miserable drunkard, who staggers now about the streets, a pitiable ruin of a life which might have been noble and godlike in its strength and beauty. Somebody whispered into the ears of the innocent girl the first word which suggested evil to her. It was

only a word, but it was a seed of wrong; and if you would see its awful harvest, look at the wretched creature who now walks the streets a sad wreck of the womanhood which God made to wear the beauty and radiance of pure and holy motherhood, and be a centre of benediction in a happy home.

When we think of this quality in all our words, touches, acts, looks, and influences, how serious a thing it is to live and mingle with others! No act is more solemn than the taking into our life of a new friend or companion, — one who is to listen to our words, to see the things we do, to receive instruction, advice, or counsel from us, to be influenced by our life. When God sends to us a friend or a new acquaintance — some one who is brought thus into the range of our influence, he has a purpose in so doing. He wants us to be a blessing to the person. He wants us to speak wholesome words, to give wise counsel, and to exert an uplifting influence, leaving impressions upon the life which shall add to its beauty and blessing. But sup-

pose that we fail in this, and that, instead, we give wrong touches to the life, drop the wrong seeds, exert an unwholesome influence, leave sinister impressions, what must our accounting be when we stand before God? The new life that comes into the circle of your friendship, companionship, or acquaintanceship, comes as a sacred trust, with a holy charge from Christ, whose the life is. You become in a very sacred sense its guardian. Your mission is to do it good, to be a blessing to it, to drop into it only seeds of purity, truth, holiness, and love. Woe be to you if the seeds your hand lets fall are seeds of evil, which shall grow into hurt or marring.

We are not done with life as we live it. We shall meet our acts and words and influences again. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." He shall reap the same that he sows, and he himself shall be the reaper. We go on carelessly, never dreaming that we shall see our seeds again, or have anything more to do with them. Then some day we come upon an ugly plant

growing somewhere; and when we ask, "What is this?" comes the answer, "I am one of your plants. You dropped the seed which grew into me." We must beware what we do. We shall have to eat the fruit that grows from our sowing and planting.

There are many phases of this truth. Jesus said, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." A man who is cruel reaps cruelty. A man who is merciful finds mercy. David unsheathed the sword in wrong against a subject, and the sword departed not from his house forever. He dishonored the happy home of another, and his own home was dishonored. Paul was a persecutor, and persecution followed him until it smote him to death. What we give to others, sooner or later comes back again to our own bosom. What we sow, that we reap.

We cannot sin against others, hurting them only, and receiving no hurt to ourselves. We are not merely sowers of seed in other lives; but while we are scattering the seed in the field of our neighbor, we are sowing also in

our own field. There are two harvests. He that corrupts another life makes his own life more corrupt than before. The tempter may cause the fall and ruin of another soul, but the evil in himself has become more evil in his doing so. Every good thing we do strengthens the good that is in us, and every wrong thing makes the wrong in us more dominant.

Nor is this all. There is a law of justice in this world which requites to every man according to his deeds. We are not living under a reign of chance. It is not merely accidental that certain people who do wrong receive punishment, and that certain people who do good receive reward. Sometimes it seems as if the law did not work universally, — that some who do wrong are not requited, and that some who do good receive no reward. But this inequality of justice is only seeming. Life does not end at the grave. If it did, we might say that the Lord's ways are not always equal. God's dealings with men are not closed in this life. The story is continued. If the Bible narrative of Joseph ended with the boy

carried into Egypt as a slave, or with the slave lad cast into prison on false charges, we would grieve over the terrible wrongs done to an innocent person and left unrequited. But when we read the story through to the end, all such feelings vanish. So the cases in which wrong seems to be unpunished and virtue unrewarded are simply unfinished life-stories. There are other chapters which will be written on the other side. When all has been completed, there will be no inequality, no injustice. All our faithfulness will have its full reward, and all sin will receive its due punishment.

"There is no wrong, by any one committed,
But will recoil;
Its sure return, with double ill repeated,
No skill can foil.

As on the earth the mists it yields to heaven
Descend in rain,
So on his head, whoe'er has evil given,
It falls again.

It is the law of life that retribution
Shall follow wrong;
It never fails, although the execution
May tarry long.

Then let us be, with unrelaxed endeavor,
Just, true, and right;
That the great law of recompense may ever
Our hearts delight."

There is one other phase of this teaching. The final harvest that comes from our sowing is in our own character. It is not a reward to be put into our hand in heaven that is promised — something that is to be given to us. The reward will be in us. It will consist in likeness to Christ. So the requital for wrong-doing will not be punishment inflicted upon the wrong-doer, but the evil itself wrought into permanence in his life. The punishment for finally unforgiven sin will be eternal sinning. Very solemn are the words in the Revelation: "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still." The truest reward for a good life is goodness wrought into the character; the surest, realest retribution is to be left to sin

forever in the ways the sinner has chosen and learned in this world. Familiar but terribly true are the statements: —

"Sow a thought, and you will reap an act;
Sow an act, and you will reap a habit;
Sow a habit, and you will reap a character;
Sow a character, and you will reap a destiny."

CHAPTER X.

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE.

Knowledge, when wisdom is too weak to guide her,
Is like a headstrong horse that throws the rider.

QUARLES.

ONE of St. Paul's pithy sayings is, "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up." He does not mean to depreciate knowledge. He is not glorifying ignorance. Knowledge builds up too. It is right for us to be learners. We should always be seeking after knowledge. He who is content to be ignorant in this world, where the stores of knowledge are so accessible, fails to grasp the meaning of life. We are to read God's thoughts wherever we can find them written. Intelligence makes one's life broader and deeper. It adds to one's power of usefulness. It makes a man more a man. We are not to understand St. Paul as casting contempt upon knowledge. He him-

self had mastered the best knowledge of his day.

But he is speaking of a certain kind of knowledge. The eating of meats which had been offered to idols is the subject he is discussing. Those to whom he was writing had been declaring that there was nothing wrong in eating such things. They knew that; and therefore they were not disposed to show any leniency of judgment to those who could not see the subject just as they saw it, nor to modify their own conduct in the slightest degree to suit the weak consciences of these other Christians. They knew that they themselves were right, and that was enough. Their knowledge settled the matter.

We all have seen people of this kind. They have no patience with other people's opinions unless they agree with their own. They allow no discussion; for there can be no other right thought about a matter when they have made up their mind upon it. They quickly resent any expression of opinion that differs from their own. When they have spoken on a sub-

ject, there is to be no tolerance of any new light. There are people of this kind in every community. Their knowledge is dogmatic, tyrannical, intolerant. When it has rendered its decision concerning any course of conduct or any question of duty, there is no appeal. Knowledge settles it.

St. Paul intimates, however, that knowledge does not always have the final word in settling questions of duty. There is another element which may have a preponderating influence in deciding what is right, — love must have its voice. It is in such cases as he is supposing, that knowledge puffs up. It makes a man vain, arrogant, cold, and selfish. But love builds up.

The two figures in St. Paul's sentence suggest a puffball and a temple. The first is showy, but light, empty, without solidity. A breath can blow it away. A child's hand can crush it. It is a mere piece of inflation. But the other is strong, substantial, beautiful, enduring. The work that knowledge alone does in a life is not good work. It lacks cohesion.

It is flimsy, insecure. Knowledge is good when love dominates it, vitalizes it, and uses it; but love must always be the real builder.

Life is full of illustrations of this truth. Without love there is no true work on character. Knowledge alone does not give us the skill we need in order to be a blessing to others. We may know that a person is undeserving. We have helped him before, and nothing came of it. We know that nothing will come of any further help we may give him. He deserves only to be thrust out and left to drift. That is what knowledge says. But love comes in, and says, "Give him another chance." It overlooks his past falls and failures, and again extends a helping hand. No matter how often help has been given to no purpose, it must be given again. Love says the man is a brother, and never should be given up. Perhaps he may yet repent and pray, and turn to God. There may be a spark remaining in the smoking lamp, and a breath may fan it into a flame. So love toils on unweariedly, never despairing, and has its reward

at last in a life saved for God and heaven. Thus love builds up, where mere knowledge leaves a life to perish.

In all our relations with others, there is the same distinction between the working of knowledge and love. Knowledge is supercilious, censorious, arrogant, stern, ofttimes cold and cruel. It has no patience with other people's faults. It is intolerant of human infirmity, and treats the mistakes of weakness or ignorance as crimes. It is relentless and unforgiving toward injury and wrong. It knows what people ought to be, how they ought to live, what perfection of character is; and it sees the smallest motes in a brother's eye, even while it carries huge beams in its own eye. Its spirit is pharisaical and critical, without a trace of forbearance or charity. It has no eye for pity, no heart for sympathy, and coldly passes by on the other side the sorest human needs. It leaves no benediction as it marches through the ways of life. No sweet flowers spring up in its path. It tramples gentle hearts under its heavy tread.

It only hurts and wounds and disheartens. Its breath is like a winter's blast as it blows over the tender things of life.

But in contrast with knowledge, love walks along life's ways with gentle step. Fragrant flowers grow in its path, and the air is always sweeter when it has passed by. It is kindly, thoughtful, pitiful, and compassionate. It has patience with human faults, and looks with an eye of tender love on those who have fallen. It is tolerant of others who, through weakness, err or turn aside. It is forbearing and long-suffering. It meekly endures injury and wrong, giving sweet love for the hurts of unkindness. It sees eagerly and joyfully the good things in others, and has a wide cloak of charity for their failings and sins. It is merciful, forgiving not seven times only, but seventy times seven. Conscious of its own fault and evil, it is lenient toward the blemishes it sees in others.

Love's portrait is drawn for us in wonderful lines in St. Paul's immortal chapter: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not;

love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away."

Thus love is always building up. It puts some line of beauty on every life it touches. It gives new hope to discouraged ones, new strength to those who are weak; thus enabling them to go on in life's ways, when without the cheer they must have sunk down in their disheartenment. It helps the despairing to rise and start again. It makes life seem more worth while to every one into whose eyes it looks. Its words are benedictions. Its every breath is full of inspirations. It does good, and never evil, all its days. It is like God, whose name is love. It carries in its influence

a perpetual revealing of God. It goes through the world like an angel of joy and peace, singing into human hearts the songs of heaven, scattering everywhere good seeds which shall yield a harvest of righteousness.

In the purposes and ambitions of life, this same distinction between knowledge and love is manifest. Knowledge is selfish, and thinks of nothing but the attaining of its own worldly end. Everything must bend to this. Success is its animating word. It is always "fighting for position;" and it strives to climb ever upward, not scrupling to use life's relations, sometimes even its most sacred friendships, as helps toward the object of its ambition. It has no time in its days for ministries of love. It goes remorselessly on, though on its ears break the most urgent appeals for help. It knows well how to make the most of life; but always thinking only of self and self-aggrandizement, it cruelly pushes forward, regardless of the human needs that cry out along the way.

On the other hand, love has time for un-

selfishness in its busiest days, time for ministry, time for the doing of the work of Christ. It is never in such haste that it cannot stop to listen to the plea of need, and to give a blessing. It has its own plans for its days, its own ambitions, its own programme of duty marked out; but when God sends his interruptions, it accepts them with patient spirit.

There is a legend of the monk Theodosius which illustrates this. When he rose one morning, there were three imperative things in his plan for the day; three things which he determined to do before the setting of the sun. But early in the morning there came from a neighboring convent a novice, asking Theodosius to give him instruction in the painter's art. The monk set to work patiently to tutor the novice, leaving his own task yet undone. At length the novice departed; but scarcely had Theodosius resumed his work when a mother came, eagerly seeking his aid for her sick child. Long was he detained, attending his patient, until the boy was relieved and restored. It was then time for vespers; and

then a brother monk in sore distress lingered, poured out his story on Theodosius' breast, and was comforted. Thus all the day was gone, and the monk had scarcely touched the things he had planned to do. He then

> "turned wearily to bed,
> Praying, 'O God! to glorify thy name
> Three things I purposed; now, with heartfelt shame
> I see the day is ended, and not one
> Of all those things my feeble skill hath done.
> Yet, since my life is thine, be thine to say
> Where shall be done the duties of the day;
> And in thy work, my work perfected be,
> Or given o'er in sacrifice to thee.'
>
> Then suddenly upon his inward ear,
> There fell the answer, gentle, calm, and clear:
> 'Thrice hath my name to-day been glorified
> In loving service, — teacher, friend, and guide.
> Such with God for man, if gladly done,
> Is heaven's ministry on earth begun.
> To work the works I purpose is to be
> At one with saints, with angels, and with me.'"

The teaching of this pleasant legend is that the divinest ministries of each day are the things of love which God sends across our way. The half-hour the busy man takes from his

business to comfort a sorrow, to help a discouraged brother to start again, to lift up one who has fainted by the way, to visit a sick neighbor and minister consolation, or to give a young person needed counsel, is the half-hour of the day that will shine the most brightly when the records of life are unrolled before God.

So we get our lesson on the superiority of love as the guide and inspirer of life. Knowledge has its place and its power, but knowledge alone is cold and stern. It thinks only of what reason would say, of the path in which logic would lead. But love has its beating heart of tenderness, which thinks of others as well as of self, and inspires to a ministry of holy deeds, which honors God and blesses the world. St. Paul was right when he said that noble and beautiful as are life's gifts, the most excellent is the way of love.

" If sudden to mine eyes, joy-dazzled bliss!
Some happy dawn, the angel of the Lord
Should come all glorious, hiding his dread sword,
And in glad greeting stoop my brow to kiss,

With message from the Master, who would grant
The dearest wish my soul had known to frame;
What would I ask, in that most Holy Name,
Which upon life most blessing would implant?

Not for great gift; nor even virtue great
In steadfast righteousness remotely set,
Uplifted, far apart from other men;
But that, in daily living's poor estate,
I might divine my stumbling neighbor's fret,
And with strong hand-clasp lift him up again."

CHAPTER XI.

DANGERS OF DISCOURAGEMENT.

Between our hope, which shines afar
Against life's sky like some bright star,
And fate's most stern, relentless bar,
All joys and woes exist;
So if our lives, which seem so bright,
Should be obscured by some dark night,
Remember there's a brighter light
No darkness can resist.

BRUCE WHITNEY.

WE are not apt to think of discouragement as either dangerous or sinful. Some people seem to think it rather a pleasant experience than otherwise; at least, they appear to find a sort of relief and satisfaction in dropping down now and then into a dispirited mood. They make no effort to overcome their disposition to sadness, or to climb out of the deep valley of shadows up to the mountain-tops where the sun is shining. They resent the kindly efforts of those who would help them

to be cheerful, as if they were meddling with matters which do not belong to them.

We should settle it once for all that the ideal Christian life is one of habitual cheerfulness. It has its experiences of difficulty, of disappointment, of suffering; but these are meant to be only lessons set for us to learn, and we are not expected to fail in them. Provision is made for us in the grace of God by which we may overcome in every such experience, and be more than conquerors through him who loved us.

A feeling of discouragement creeping into our heart should be met, therefore, as a temptation. He who opens to it, and lets it in, does not know to what sin and sorrow it may lead him. An example will help us to understand the peril of discouragement. A fragment of old history tells us of the Israelites, that at a certain time they were much discouraged because of the way.

The way itself was indeed hard, rough, and dreary, leading through the sandy Arabah, where the heat was intense, with no shelter

anywhere from the sun's fierce, smiting rays. It was discouraging also because it was a sudden interruption of their journey. When they were at the very gate of the promised land, a barrier was thrown across their path, and they were compelled to make a long detour through an inhospitable wilderness, instead of entering at once into the country toward which for so long their hopes had been leading them. What made it all so much worse was the needlessness of it, but for Edom's disobligingness. Edom would not allow his brother to pass through his country to reach his own land. Indeed, he said that if he attempted to pass, he would resist him with armed force. It certainly was very discouraging to be treated so by a brother.

We are scarcely surprised that the Israelites were discouraged, and yet we must read the story through to see to what the discouragement led. They murmured against God and against Moses. Then murmuring grew into profane contempt of God's mercy and goodness, and to the grievous sin of rebellion. It

is when we follow it to its final outcome that we see the true nature of discouragement.

Many people find the way of life hard at some time or other. There are scarcely any who do not come upon points of hardness, even amid the most prosperous and happy years. There are elements in many people's condition and circumstances which in themselves are hard. Sometimes it is sickness, sometimes poverty, sometimes sorrow. The burdens are heavy. The toil is oppressive. The way is wearisome.

Then sometimes, as in the case of the Israelites, much of the hardness is caused by unbrotherly conduct. There are brothers who put barriers in the way, and make life harder for brothers. We all need to guard our conduct most sedulously, lest we become hinderers of others in their life. It is a sin to be a hinderer. We commit a grievous wrong against another when we make life harder for him — when we make it harder for him to be true, honest, pure-hearted, and worthy. Edom made it immeasurably harder for Israel, simply

by being disobliging. There are many people who make the way longer and harder for others, when by a little unselfish obligingness, a little cheering helpfulness, they might make it easier for them.

It is a sin to be a discourager. The ten spies who brought back the cowardly report about the giants, and thus spread disheartenment and dismay, wrought a great crime against the people. Their discouraging words led to most calamitous consequences, — the doom of death on a whole generation, and the shutting of a nation out of the promised land for forty years. Yet like wrongs are being committed continually right in our own Christian days. Discouragers go about among men, and, by their gloomy, pessimistic words, make life incalculably harder for them. They put out the lamps of cheer and hope that shine in men's homes. They quench the very stars that burn in the sky above men's heads. They take the gladness out of hearts. They see only the dark shadows of life, never the sunshine; and they prate wherever they go of gloom and

care. They never bring us a message of cheer. We are never stronger, braver, happier, or truer for meeting them. On the other hand, after a talk with one of these discouragers, we always feel as if part of life's beauty had faded, as if there were less to live for. Our stars of hope shine less brightly, and a sense of weariness and languor creeps over our spirits. Life is harder for us after meeting them.

There should be nothing but condemnation for the discourager. He is an enemy of his fellows. He casts a black shadow over human hearts. He is a misanthrope. It is a sore sin against humanity to make life harder for men. Our great Teacher spoke some of his most burning words against those who put stumbling-blocks in the path of God's little ones. This divine censure falls upon all who in any way lay hindrances in the paths of others.

The Christian duty of every one is to be an encourager, a helper of others in their life. No mission can be nobler, diviner, than that

of him who lives to be an inspirer of hope and cheer, and to make others braver and stronger for life's experiences. There is a pleasant story of a plain woman in Glasgow, who, one summer day, was walking along a street in which some poorly clad children were running barefooted at their play. A policeman saw this woman stoop down again and again as she went on, each time picking up something which she put in her apron. The officer supposed she was finding and appropriating something she should not take away, and, hurrying after her, demanded in a threatening manner that she let him see what she had in her apron. The trembling woman complied, and showed the guardian of the city's safety some pieces of broken glass which she had gathered up out of the street. "I thought I would take them out of the way of the bairns' feet," she said. The act was a beautiful one. The poor woman was doing angels' work. She was making the street a safer place for the children to play in.

There are some thoughtful people who will

never let a piece of banana-skin or orange-peel lie on the pavement, but will stop, no matter how hurriedly they are walking, to remove the dangerous rind, lest some one might be made to stumble, and be maimed by stepping on it. It is well that there always are those who have an eye and a hand for such ministries, who are ready to save us from the consequences of others' hurtful carelessness.

It should be our aim, not only to pick up bits of broken glass from the children's playgrounds to make them safer, and to lift from the sidewalks bits of orange-peel or banana-skin to prevent accidents to the unwary, but in all life's ways to gather out the stones and the stumbling-blocks, and whatever might hinder or hurt our fellow-pilgrim in his journey.

Whatever the cause of, or whoever is responsible for the hardness, there is no doubt that in every life there are many experiences which have a discouraging tendency. It may seem almost too much to say that whatever

the hardness of the way may be, nevertheless, a Christian should never be discouraged. Yet this is the other side of the lesson. It is never safe to give way to even the beginnings of discouragement; for if we do, we cannot know what the end will be. Discouragement cherished leads to despondency and despair. Even if it does not grow to such sad ripeness, it works grievous harm in a life. It produces a noxious atmosphere, in which all the lamps burn but dimly. It weakens one's moral purposes, and paralyzes one's energies. A discouraged man is only half himself. He takes hold of duty with only half his wonted earnestness. His feet drag wearily as he goes about his duties. Discouragement makes the hard way harder, and the heavy load heavier. We should live continually so that our life shall make it easier for others to live; never to be hinderers, but always helpers, of others.

No one can afford to yield to discouragement, even for one hour, in the smallest degree. We require all our strength all the

time if we would be equal to the burden, stress, and responsibility of our common days. Life is not easy for any of us, if we would meet it worthily, and make of it what God expects us to make. It is necessary that our eye shall be clear, its light undimmed; that our heart shall beat with full pulsings; that our hand shall be strong and steady, and that all our powers shall be at their best. This cannot be if we are the prey of discouragement, or if we yield in even the smallest degree to its influence.

Then, not only does discouragement weaken us, unfitting us for our best work, but it leads to doubt and unbelief, and ofttimes to other sins. It leads to murmuring and complaining, and these are sins which grieve God. It makes men blind to God's goodness, and ofttimes rebellious against God's will. Many people throw away their chance in life through discouragement. When Norman McLeod was a boy he was much discouraged, and, in a fit of petulance, said, "I wish I never had been born!" His pious mother said, "Norman,

you have been born; and, if you were a wise bairn, you would ask the Lord what you were born for." He took the good advice, and found that God had a noble plan for his life.

"But how can we keep from being discouraged?" asks some one. "When the way is hard, when the burdens are heavy, when the path is through hot deserts, when even brothers make life harder for us, how can we help being discouraged?" There is an answer to this question of fearfulness in the words of the old Hebrew prophet:—

> For though the fig tree shall not blossom,
> Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
> The labor of the olive shall fail,
> And the fields shall yield no meat;
> The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
> And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
> Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
> I will joy in the God of my salvation.
> Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,
> And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet,
> And will make me to walk upon mine high places.

If we are Christians, there never can be a sufficient reason why we should be discour-

aged. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" We need only to abide in Christ, doing always our simple duty, and leaving all in his hands.

There is no doubt that every hard thing that God permits to come into our life has a blessing wrapped up in it. The things which appear before us as discouragements prove to be helps toward nobler attainments. A Christian physician, whose career has been full of faith and noble ministry, gives this experience: He was a poor boy, and a cripple. One day he was watching some other boys on the ball-field. They were active, strong, and wealthy. As he looked on, his heart grew bitter with envy. A young man who stood beside him noted the discontent on his face, and said to him, "You wish you were in those boys' place, don't you?"—"Yes, I do," was the answer. "I reckon God gave them money, education, and health," continued the young man, "to help them to be of some account in the world. Did it never strike you," he continued, after a moment's

pause, "that he gave you your lame leg for the same reason, — to make a man of you?"

The boy gave no answer, and turned away. He was angry, but he did not forget the words. His crippled leg God's gift! To teach him patience, courage, perseverance! To make a man of him! He thought of the words till he saw their meaning. They kindled hope and cheer, and he determined to conquer his hindrance. He grew heroic. He soon learned that what was true of his lame leg was true also of all the difficulties, hindrances, and hard conditions of his life, — they were all God's gifts to him to help him to be of some account in the world, — to make a man of him.

The lesson is for all of us, especially for young people who seem born with more than their share of disadvantages, limitations, hard conditions. God gave them this load, whatever it is, to make something of them. The deformity, the burden, the weight of some other one's need laid upon the shoulder, the inheritance of difficulty which seems to be a

hindrance to a worthy life, is but another chance to grow, to become stronger, richer-hearted, more a man or a woman, to win a higher place in life, and a brighter crown in glory.

In any case, we should never give place to discouragement for a moment. If we are God's children, we have only to keep ourselves in God's hands, and keep our own hands off; then, out of the sorest difficulties and the hardest conditions, blessings will come. God lives, and is caring for us, and we can say:—

> "God's in his heaven —
> All's right with the world."

CHAPTER XII

TALKING ABOUT ONE'S SELF.

"Love thyself last; and thou shalt grow in spirit
To see, to hear, to know, and understand.
The message of the stars, lo! thou shalt hear it,
And all God's joys shall be at thy command.

Love thyself last. The world shall be made better
By thee, if this brief motto forms thy creed.
Go follow it in spirit and in letter,
This is the Christ-religion which men need."

One of the evils of self-love is the tendency to talk about one's self. It seems a harmless habit to fall into, but in reality it is most unfortunate. Talking about one's self is always perilous. It were safer to exclude the theme altogether from the list of topics for conversation. There may be matters referring to one's self that it shall sometimes seem necessary to discuss. They may be matters of general interest about which other people will insist on talking. But there

is a way of speaking of such things without bringing in the personal element. At least, if one's own part in the affair or the achievement must be brought out, it were better that others should do it, and not the participant.

But sometimes people do not know of the important part we have taken in the good work that has been done. They may even be giving the credit to others, altogether unaware that it was our wisdom which inspired the thought, our quick energy which wrought it out into achievement, or our deft hands to which the final success was due. It seems to us only just and right that the truth should be known, and there is only one way to have it made known, — we must tell our friends of our important part in the affair.

But we are mistaken in all this. Possibly we may be in error concerning the relative largeness and importance of our own part in what has been accomplished. We are prone to see the value of our own work and influ-

ence writ large. We may stand so close to the achievement that we cannot see how many other hands have been at work in bringing it about. But even if we have been one of the chief actors, and if what we think of our own achievement is unexaggerated, it still remains true that it does not become us to talk about it. There is really no absolute necessity that the world should know of our fine achievement. It matters not who the human instrument in Christian work may be; we are secondary always, and the honor is the Master's. Much of the best work for Christ in this world is wrought anonymously. No one knows who did it; no name is written on it. What does it matter whether we are praised or not when we have been working for Christ? He knows what heart and hand have wrought for him, and that is publicity enough.

Indeed, one of the marks of acceptable work is indicated by the great Teacher himself in his exhortation that we do not our righteousness before men to be seen of them;

else we shall have no reward with our Father in heaven. Very explicit is the counsel that we do not sound a trumpet before us in synagogue or street when we do good; that we let not our left hand know what our right hand doeth; that our good deed may be in secret. Certain it is that work done for human and earthly reward is not so honorable as that done only for the eye and the commendation of Christ. Thinking about one's self in connection with what one is doing, and doing it for one's own honoring, will always vitiate its worth.

The inference from this teaching is that it is not only not necessary for people to know our part in the good deeds which are attracting their attention, but that it is better they should not know; that it is a diviner doing which receives no praise of men. Certainly it is very clear from these words of Jesus, that far from being under necessity to declare our good works with our own lips, it is our duty rather to keep secret what we have done. Our reward is not men's com-

meadation. It is plainly said that those who do good deeds to have glory of men get the recompense they seek; but it is intimated that this is all the reward they get. But those who seek to conceal from men their alms-deeds, letting not their left hand know what their right hand doeth, shall have recompense from the Father in heaven, who seeth in secret.

There is no doubt that, even in the estimation of men, talking of one's self does one harm, defeating the very end one has in view in seeking honor. It is almost universally true that whenever a man begins to talk about himself, he hurts himself with those to whom he speaks. He makes himself appear less noble and winning to them. The good things he says about himself, however true they may be, lose much of their lustre and worthiness by being proclaimed by his own lips. Self-praise never can appear lovely, no matter how true it is, nor how deserving. The spirit which prompts a man to talk about himself, however it may be disguised,

is really self-conceit; and self-conceit is not only a disfiguring blemish in a character; it is also a mark of weakness in a life. Its revealing always makes one less strong and influential with one's fellows. Instead of taking the self-conceited man's own estimate of himself, people discount it so heavily that they are likely, on account of his self-praise, to rate him much below his true value. Thus a man's very object in talking about himself, and proclaiming his own virtues and good deeds, is defeated. He does not receive praise of men, but dislike and depreciation instead of praise.

Here is a bit of good counsel on this whole subject from Bishop Wilberforce: "Think as little as possible about any good in yourself. Turn your eyes resolutely from any view of your acquirements, your influence, your plans, your successes, your following — above all, speak as little as possible about yourself. The inordinateness of our self-love makes speech about ourselves like the putting of a lighted torch to the dry wood which has

been laid in order for burning. Nothing but duty should open our lips upon this dangerous theme, except it be in humble confession of our sinfulness before God."

These are wise words. We should train ourselves not to think about our own good deeds. If we have done anything beautiful, made a self-denial for another's sake, conquered a feeling of resentment, given help or shown a kindness, the temptation will be to think about it in a spirit of self-commendation. But it is better we should resolutely turn from it, not allowing our thoughts to linger for a moment on the thing we have done. If we stop to contemplate our own virtues, attainments, or achievements, we do not know what the end will be. The only safe thing is to refuse to think at all of ourselves or our work. Self-consciousness is always a mark of unwholesomeness. When we say of one who has done a fine thing, "That was well done, and he knows it," our commendation is obliterated by what follows it. The most beautiful spirit is one that is

unconscious of its own beauty. When we begin to talk of the good in us, or in our work, we mar whatever is beautiful.

Nevertheless, there are many people who disregard such counsel, and continually fall into the snare of speaking about themselves. There are many who entertain you every time you meet them with a recital of their ills and troubles. When you innocently and courteously ask, "How do you do to-day?" you open the gates of speech to an account of poor health, of uncomfortable feelings, of aches and pains, of bad nights and days of wretchedness, enough to crush an ordinary mortal into the grave. If such people knew how wearisome such hypochondriac talk is to their friends, they would break off the lugubrious habit. When a friend or neighbor greets us on a bright morning, and expresses the hope that we are well, he does not want us to recite in his ears a long chapter of melancholy imaginations. Far better is a cheerful greeting, with nothing but brightness in tone and word. Even if

we have had a sleepless night, with bad dreams, and are suffering from a dozen serious complaints, there is no reason why we should talk about our discomforts and our ills. This is not among "whatsoever things are lovely." We have no right to unlade our unhappinesses where they must become disturbing elements in the lives of others. At least, it is nobler for us to try to carry them ourselves. Then such a habit of complaining spoils the sweetness of one's spirit, and mars the beauty of one's character. Talking of one's frets and worries is surely an unlovely and an unprofitable thing.

There are some preachers who fall into a perilous habit of talking about themselves in the pulpit. They tell incidents in which they have had a more or less conspicuous part. They repeat what good people have said to them or about them, not even withholding the compliments. They take pains that their agency in important achievements shall not fail to be known, and are careful in announcing meetings in which they are to participate

to say that they will speak on the occasion. If these clergymen realized that nearly every time they speak thus of themselves in public, they not only violate the spirit of the Master's teaching, but also lessen their influence with their people and make their ministry less effective, they would forever seal their lips against so dangerous a theme.

There are men who seem never to think of anything save in its relation to themselves. A clergyman of the generation just past, as he grew old would attend the funerals of all the men of his own age, and would seek the opportunity to say "a few words" on the occasion. Instead, however, of extolling the virtues of the deceased, he would glide, perhaps unconsciously, into autobiographical reminiscence, telling the friends, not what the good man in the coffin had done, but what he, the speaker, had done in connection with him. Surely it is a sad illustration of the danger of talking about one's self, that a man should become such a slave to the habit that even in a funeral sermon all he can do is to

grow garrulous over reminiscences of his own life.

In all lines this tendency to talk about one's self has abundant illustration. There are generous givers the worth of whose charity is discounted everywhere by the vanity which always sees that their gifts are well announced. There are writers whose finest pages are disfigured by the continual recurrence of the first personal pronoun singular. They write scarcely a paragraph in which they do not flaunt their miserable egoism. There are conversationalists who, whatever subject they discuss, always manage to talk about themselves.

The aim of all these men is to make their own brightness or greatness apparent to others, to have their neighbor duly impressed with their importance. Unfortunately, however, the effect is in every case just the reverse of that intended. Egoism belittles a man. Personal vanity dims the lustre of a name. We would better be content to have our good deeds go unpraised than that our

own lips should speak the praise. The story of our life should rather not be told than that we should be our own biographers. The wise man's counsel is good:—

> Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth;
> A stranger, and not thine own lips.

The praise of others, if sincere, is honorable; but when we take it upon ourselves to tell the story of our own greatness, or point out the excellences of our own character, we do that which is unseemly. It were better that we go on with our life and work, doing always our best, and then leave in God's hands all the matter of praise and reward.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHY DID YOU FAIL?

In life's small things be resolute and great
To keep thy muscles trained; know'st thou when Fate
Thy measure takes? or when she'll say to thee,
"I find thee worthy, do this thing for me"?
Quoted by LOWELL.

IT grieved Jesus to have his disciples fail in their faith. One reason was personal. The joy of being trusted is one of the holiest experiences that can come to any human heart. We do not understand the sweetest privilege of friendship until in some hour of need or weakness or sorrow our friend trusts us absolutely, leans upon us, as it were puts his very life into our hand. The opposite of this is the pain of not being trusted. It may not be through any lack of love, or lack of confidence in our character or strength, but only through fear; yet the failure of a friend to trust us, whatever the cause, hurts our heart.

Jesus was human, and these experiences of our own help us to understand his feeling when his disciples did not trust him. He was deeply grieved. We have an illustration in the story of Peter's trying to walk on the water. For a time he walked calmly on the waves, and then he began to sink. Jesus reached out his hand and saved his disciple from drowning, and then chided him: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Peter need not have failed in his venture of faith. If only he had not doubted he would not have failed.

But who has not had like failures in his own experience? We all are given opportunities for doing noble things. They may not be conspicuous things, like walking on the sea; ofttimes they are things which must be done where no eye but God's can see us. Yet, nevertheless, they are things in which we must show faith and courage, self-control and fidelity, or fail and disappoint our Master. Too often we fail.

A temptation comes into our life. It is not easy to resist it. But there is a wonderful

promise which says that God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. For a time we resist the temptation, but the stress becomes sorer and sorer. It is a crisis hour. We take our eyes off the Master, and fail.

We are set to witness for Christ in a certain place. He has no other one to stand for him there. All about us are those who do not know him. It is our mission to show to them the power and the beauty of the Christian life. They will not read the Bible, nor enter the church. They only scoff when it is intimated to them that they need Christ. Our lives are the only interpretations of Christ which they can be brought to see. We cannot preach to them, for our words would be trodden underfoot. All we can do is just to continue faithful, to be gentle, patient, unselfish, true, good-tempered, holy, day after day, week after week, without faltering. But it is not easy to do this. The smallest failure will be noted, and gloried in as a failure of Christianity. If we lose our patience, speak unadvisedly, reveal even for a few moments a bitter or jealous

spirit, speak an untruth, do an unjust thing — if in anything we act in a manner unbecoming a Christian, we have failed Christ.

We then confess that we have sinned; but do we realize what the full consequences of our failure may be? We are standing for Christ, and the faith of others in Christ is weakened by our faltering.

We have no adequate conception of the far-reaching influence of our acts and words. We do not live for ourselves alone any single day. Our smallest deeds touch other lives, and set in motion currents of moral impression which shall roll on forever. We do not know what it may mean to Christ's cause on the earth, and to other human souls, for us to be true and faithful any little hour. We do not know what eyes are upon us in the common life of the common days — watching us, not critically, not hoping to find some flaw in us, but with most eager desire to learn if indeed there be grace in Christ to help a soul to be faithful.

Thousands who are thus watching us will turn to Christ or turn away from Christ, ac-

cording as we stand the test or do not stand it. Our victory means for them a belief in Christ's power to help; but our defeat means the weakening, perhaps the dying, of faith and hope in them. We never know what may depend on our being faithful and firm any little hour, or what may be lost if we fail. There is never a moment when it makes no matter whether we are true or not. We need God's help in the common days just as much as in what seem to us great days. We all need to pray very often a prayer like this: —

> "God help us through the common days,
> The level stretches, white with dust,
> When thought is tired, and hands upraise
> Their burden feebly, since they must.
> In days of slowly fretting care
> Then most we need the strength of prayer."

One is called to a great trial of patience. It is a mother, and her home cares lay upon her trembling nerves a sore strain. There are a thousand things to try her. It is hard for her to keep always sweet and patient. Sometimes, in a moment of weakness and weari-

ness, she loses her self-control, and speaks unadvisedly. It seems a little thing to fail in temper. Nothing is more common. It is easy to soothe one's conscience, and allay the momentary feeling of shame, by thinking excusingly of one's tired nerves, and how hard it is to be always calm and self-poised. But meanwhile what has been the effect of the mother's unseemly conduct on the tender lives of the children? Bad temper is usually unjust. Its hot, hasty words are unkind and hurtful, words which burn and pierce, words which should never have been spoken. Besides, the mother was standing for Christ before her children, and she has failed to show them the strength and peace and beauty of Christ.

Christ is very patient with our weakness when he knows that we do what we can do; yet we should strive not to fail him in temper, even if the strain is sore. It is in these pages of every-day life that we must write our word or two, and we ought to write only what will truly interpret the spirit and life of our Master.

One is in deep sorrow. He wanted to be submissive to God's will. But in a moment of weakness and pain he murmured. Or he was sick and shut away. It was hard to be quiet and still. There is a story of one, a godly man, who had frequent and violent paroxysms of most intense pain which he could scarcely endure. He would lie on the floor in anguish, trying to bear it all sweetly and patiently. When the paroxysm was over he would ask his friends: "Did I complain? I did not want to complain." He was always grieved if he thought he had uttered a single word or groan of impatience.

Few of us think of such expressions of complaint as being wrong. It is so common to give way to our feelings when we are suffering that we come to regard it as an unavoidable consequence of our infirmity. But we need to remember that in all our experiences of pain we are representing Christ; and it is quite as much our duty to be patient in suffering, as it is to be honest, truthful, and just in our dealings with our fellow-men. A fail-

ure to be so is a failure in most faithful witnessing for Christ. Nor do we know what may be the effect on the faith and trust of others of our want of quietness and confidence in suffering.

One who had seen a friend passing through a long season of intense pain with sustained joy which often broke into song, said, "Now I know that there is a reality in the religion of Christ. My friend never could have endured her suffering as she did, if she had not been divinely helped." What would have been the effect on this same friend if the sufferer had given way to fretting and complaining as so many Christians do in their experiences of pain?

Nor do we know how such failures — trivial, they seem to us — hurt our own life, and rob us of the deeper joy and the richer peace which might have been ours. We get so accustomed to chafing, worrying, complaining, irritation of temper, and impatience, that we rarely think of these things as being hurtful to our own souls. But there is not one of

the failures of our infirmity which, besides its evil effect on those about us, does not also leave its marring or wounding on our own life, and hinder in some degree our growth and our happiness as a Christian. There are acts of single moments which cast a shadow over all life's after years. Moses was the meekest of men; but once, and just for a moment, in a great stress, and when tried by a most unreasonable people, he lost his patience, and spoke unadvised words. We know what that one minute's loss of meekness cost him. It prevented his entering into the land of promise, toward which for forty years he had been toiling.

How many such fateful minutes are there in the lives of the great masses of Christians, when, with the one thousandth part of the provocation of Moses, they fail far more sorely? We know not what sublime things we throw away in our failures of patience, peace, and self-control. "In your patience ye shall win your lives," said the Master. The losing of patience, therefore, may be the losing of all.

The lesson from all this is that the failures of faith are far more serious than we are apt to think them. They are sins against Christ, who is trusting us and testing us; sins against others, who are looking to see what Christ can do for a soul in stress or suffering, and whose faith is weakened, perhaps destroyed, by our faltering; and sins against our own life, leaving us maimed and hurt, and cutting us off from the full realization of the hopes of our life.

Peter began to sink because he took his eye off Christ, and let it fall on the waves about his feet. It was because his faith failed that he sank. "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" was the Master's pained question. The only secret of sustained victoriousness in living amid trials, temptations, and sufferings, is sustained faith. We need not be defeated. We may always overcome and be more than conquerors, but it can be only in him who loves us. He overcame the world, and in him we may have peace.

Shall we not then seek to be braver, truer,

more steadfast in meeting these crucial hours of experience? They may come to us any day. We shall not know them by any special mark from the other hours. They will not announce themselves to us, nor call us to unwonted watchfulness by any warning bell. They will come quietly, suddenly, unexpectedly. In the heart of your calmest, commonest day there will be an hour when your life will be in peril. It may be in a sore temptation; it may be in a surprise of joy; it may be in a keen disappointment; it may be in a bitter sorrow; or it may be in a pressure of duty or responsibility. To be ready for the experience, whatever it shall be, whenever it may come, you need to keep always near the Master, with your eye upon him. He walks the waters beside you, and you will never sink unless your faith fail. Why should you fail?

CHAPTER XIV.

PASSING BY ON THE OTHER SIDE.

Who fain would help in this world of ours,
Where sorrowful steps must fall,
Bring help in time to the waning powers
Ere the bier is spread with the pall;
Nor send reserves when the flags are furled,
And the dead beyond your call.

MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

No lesson is harder to learn than the lesson of love. It may be found, too, that of love's lessons those which refer to our fellow-men are harder to get into our life than those which refer to God. It is easier to love one infinitely above us than the one who walks beside us every day. We find it difficult enough to love our close personal friends in the full, deep, rich, constant, unselfish way that the divine teaching requires. Even in the tenderest relations it is hard to be always patient, thoughtful, gentle, helpful, and free from envy and jealousy and all irritation.

Yet still more difficult is it to learn the larger lesson of loving our neighbor as ourself. We like to settle for ourself who our neighbor is; and then we like to decide upon just the way in which we shall show our love to him. But we really have nothing to do with either of these matters; we cannot select our neighbor, nor can we take our own way of loving him.

Many of us would like to write out love's duty to one's neighbor in a series of "Thou shalt nots." This would make it much easier. It is not so hard to refrain from doing our neighbor harm as it is to reach out our hand to do him good. With a little effort at self-control we can resist the impulse to return blow for blow, to demand tooth for tooth, to repay unkindness with unkindness; but it requires very much more grace to give a kiss for a blow, to return kindness for unkindness, to repay wrong and injustice with meekness and mercy.

In one of our Lord's wonderful parables we have an example of loving by not doing harm,

and set over against it, the true ideal of loving by doing good and serving. The story is familiar. Neither the priest nor the Levite did the wounded man any harm. It was the robbers who hurt him almost to death. The men who passed by were good men, with kind hearts and gentle feelings. They felt sorry for the poor man. One of them lingered a moment, and told the sufferer that he was very sorry he had been hurt so badly. They would not have done him any injury for the world, — this good priest fresh from his sacred functions, and this Levite with hands consecrated to holy service.

No; and yet somehow the story reads as if they had done something not just right, as if they had injured the wounded man in some way. When we think the matter through, we find that the Master means to teach us that we may do sore wrong to others by not doing love's duties to them.

We do not think much of this kind of sins. At the close of the day we examine ourselves, and review our record to find wherein we

should confess sin. We remember the hasty word we spoke, which gave pain to a tender heart, and also grieved the Holy Spirit. We recall our self-indulgence, our unkind feelings, our selfish acts, our envyings and jealousies, our impatience and anger, and we make confession of all these sins, asking forgiveness. But do we make confession of the things we did not do which we ought to have done? Are we penitent for our failures to do deeds of kindness? During the day we have passed by on the other side of many a human need and want and danger; do we confess these neglects among the day's sins? The "other side" is too well trodden by many of us. The path is beaten hard by our feet.

Some people talk a great deal about perfection. They mean really only a life free from positive and wilful sins. They do not think of that whole hemisphere of life which in them is almost empty. Love is not doing others no harm; it is doing them all the good that it is in our power to do. We are taught to pray, not "Forgive us our crimes," but

"Forgive us our debts." Debts are what we owe. It is not supposed that respectable people will commit crimes against their neighbors; but when we look into the matter closely, we shall find that most of our days leave unpaid debts — debts of love; kindnesses or services due to others, but not paid, certainly not paid in full. The priest and the Levite did not hurt the wounded man, but they failed to pay him the debt they owed him. What they owed and did not pay was the difference between their passing by in harmless neglect and the noble service which the good Samaritan rendered.

It is well to press the application of the lesson very closely. All along life's dusty wayside lie wounded men and women, robbed and left to die. We are continually passing by them. Which *rôle* are we playing, — the priest's and Levite's, or the good Samaritan's? Take a single day's life, and see how many times we pass by on the other side. You learned of a neighbor in trouble. It was in your thought to go to him to offer him help. But you did

not do it. The day closed, and there was that brotherly kindness which you ought to have done left undone. Yonder, at the ending of the day, your neighbor is still bowing in the darkness beneath his burden. He might have been rejoicing had it not been for your sin of omission.

Here is one who has failed, and fallen into the dust. There he lies, wounded in his soul, unable to rise. You know of him — he was an old neighbor of yours, a schoolmate perhaps. You have a vision of the possibilities that are in your old friend's soul, under sin's ruin, and you feel impelled to go to him in Christ's name. But you do not follow the good impulse — you pass by on the other side, and let him lie where he fell. Listen to the word of the Lord: "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." You were not his tempter. The wounds in his soul you did

not inflict. You did nothing to lead him into sin. Yet you knew of his wounding, his fall, his peril, and had it in your power at least to try to save him. But you offered no helping hand, spoke no word of love to warn him. You simply passed by on the other side.

All about us evermore are human needs and sorrows which make their mute appeal to us. We are our brother's keeper. It will not avail as excuse for us that we did our brother no harm. That was not what he needed from us, — security against being hurt by us. A little kindness shown to him would have proved a wonderful blessing to him. The struggle was too much for his strength, and even a word of cheer would have helped him. He was facing the world's cold blasts, and a moment's shelter in love's warmth would have renewed his courage for what was yet before him. Susan Coolidge writes: —

If you were toiling up a weary hill,
Bearing a load beyond your strength to bear,
Straining each nerve untiringly, and still
Stumbling and losing foothold here and there;

And each one passing by would do so much
As give one upward lift and go his way,
Would not the slight, reiterated touch
Of help and kindness lighten all the day?

If you were breasting a keen wind, which tossed
And buffeted and chilled you as you strove,
Till, baffled and bewildered quite, you lost
The power to see the way and aim and move;
And one, if only for a moment's space,
Gave you shelter from the bitter blast,
Would you not find it easier to face
The storm again when the brief rest was past?

It looks as if the priest, when he came near the wounded man, kept his face turned away so that he could not see him. There are many people who do the same in these days. They refuse to see the misery and sorrow about them. But keeping ourselves ignorant of human needs will never excuse us for not relieving them. The Levite turned aside, and looked at the wounded sufferer, and said, "Poor fellow, I am very sorry for you. Are you much hurt? I hope some of your friends will come to help you." Then he went on. There is much of this kind of sympathy in

the world. People express interest in those who are suffering, telling them how sorry they are for them. Perhaps they promise to pray for them. Then they pass by on the other side. Such sympathy is very cheap, and is as valueless as cheap. It costs to do good to others. We cannot love our neighbor as ourself, and then save ourself from self-denial and sacrifice. He that will save his life shall lose it. The way to save our life in reality is to give it out in love as the good Samaritan gave out his life. It may seem a waste, a failure; but nothing emptied out in love is wasted.

> "Long, long centuries
> Agone One walked the earth, his life
> A seeming failure:
> Dying, he gave the world a gift
> That will outlast eternities."

But whatever the cost, we should never fail in a duty of love. We do grievous wrong to others by withholding from them what we owe to them. There is a sin of not doing. We shall be judged, not alone by what we do,

but also by what we leave undone. We need to give more heed to the active side of our life. We cannot cut ourselves off from our brothers. It is not enough to think of getting on in the world; we dare not seek to get on and pay no heed to those who are journeying with us. There is a startling saying of Amiel's which we would do well to ponder: "It is better to be lost than to be saved alone." One writes:—

We go our ways in life too much alone;
  We hold ourselves too far from all our kind;
Too often we are dead to sigh and moan;
  Too often to the weak and helpless blind;
Too often, where distress and want abide,
We turn, and pass upon the other side.

The other side is trodden smooth, and worn
  By footsteps passing idly all the day;
Where lie the bruisèd ones that faint and mourn
  Is seldom more than an untrodden way.
Our selfish hearts are for our feet the guide—
They lead us by upon the other side.

It should be ours the oil and wine to pour
  Into the bleeding wounds of stricken ones;
To take the smitten and the sick and sore,
  And bear them where a stream of blessing runs.

Instead we look about — the way is wide,
And so we pass upon the other side.

Oh, friends and brothers, gliding down the years,
Humanity is calling each and all
In tender accents, born of grief and tears:
I pray you listen to the thrilling call!
You cannot in your cold and selfish pride
Pass guiltlessly by on the other side.

CHAPTER XV.

OVER-WAITING FOR GOD.

"Dig channels for the streams of Love,
Where they may broadly run —
And Love has overflowing streams
To fill them every one.
But if at any time thou fail
Such channels to provide,
The very fount of love itself
Will soon be parched and dried;
For thou must *share*,
If thou wouldst keep
This good thing from above;
Ceasing to share, you cease to have;
Such is the Law of Love."

A GREAT deal is said in the Bible about waiting for God. The lesson cannot be too strongly enforced. We easily grow impatient of God's delays. Much of our trouble in life comes out of our restless, sometimes reckless, haste. We cannot wait for the fruit to ripen, but insist on plucking it while it is green, and when it is most unwholesome. We cannot wait for the story to be written out chapter

by chapter; but, in our eagerness to know how it will end, we want to omit the links of its development, and hurry on to the close. We cannot wait till the picture is completed, but insist on taking our view of it while it is unfinished, and criticising it as if the artist's work on it were done. We cannot wait for the answer to our prayers, although the things we ask for may require long years in their preparation for us. We are exhorted to walk with God; but ofttimes God walks very slowly, and we do not care to linger back with him. We are very eager to get forward, and cannot wait. Thus the lesson of waiting for God is always an important one.

But there is another phase of the lesson. God often waits for us. We fail many times to receive the blessing he has ready for us because we do not go forward with him. While we miss much good through not waiting for God, we also miss much through overwaiting. There are times when our strength is to stand still, but there also are times when we are to go forward with firm step.

There are many divine promises which are conditioned upon the beginning of some action on our part. When we begin to obey, God will begin to bless us; and as we continue in our obedience, his blessing will continue to be given to us. Great things were promised to Abraham, but not one of them could have been obtained by waiting in Chaldea. He must leave home, friends, possessions, and country, and go out into unknown paths, and press on in unfaltering obedience, in order to receive the promises.

When the Israelites were beside the Red Sea, shut in by natural walls, pressed by a pursuing army, and in peril of destruction, there were two commands given to Moses, which illustrate both sides of this waiting lesson. In answer to the fear and murmuring of the people, Moses said to them, "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." They had nothing to do just at that moment but to wait until God should work. But a little later, as Moses was praying to God, there came to him the command, "Wherefore

criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." The duty was no longer one of waiting, but one of rising up from bended knees, and going forward in the way of heroic faith.

Perhaps oftener than we know do we need the same exhortation. There are times when prayer is not the duty of the hour, but when we must rise from our knees and go afield. We think we are honoring God by waiting quietly, patiently, and prayerfully till he shall open the way for us, while really we are dishonoring him by want of present faith and ready obedience. Blessing waits for us while we are waiting, but it cannot be given to us until we go forth to get it. Not always is resignation a duty; sometimes it is sin, — a sin of indolence, inertness, disobedience, unbelief.

We have a familiar illustration of this teaching in the story of the Israelites' crossing of the Jordan. The river did not open while the people were waiting in their camps. If they had stayed there, it would not have opened

for them at all. They must show their faith in God by breaking camp, making all preparation for passing over into the Land of Promise, and then beginning their march while yet the river ran to its widest banks. It is remarkable that not until the advance guard of priests came to the very edge of the water did the river begin to sink away. If the people had waited back in their camps for the opening of the way for them through the river before they would begin their movement, the way would never have been opened. The key to unlock the gate into the Land of Promise they held in their own hand, and the gate would not turn on its hinges until they had approached it and unlocked it. That key was faith. They must believe God's promise that a way would be made for them, and must rise up and move forward as if there were no intervening river.

Life is full of just such occasions as this. The miracle of the river is a parable for all our common days and our common experiences. Difficulties and obstacles lie before us, seem-

ing to block our way. Beyond these hindrances are fair fields filled with beauty and treasure. Honors wait there for us. If only we could pass over, we should be rich; our life would be nobler, stronger. But between us and those heights of privilege, attainment, and achievement runs the impassable river. The voice of the divine life within us calls us to go on to win and possess the fair lands that shine in such radiance before us. But we think of the river, and say, "If God will open the way through it, then I can pass over." Then we sit down in our hampered environment to wait for God to take the obstacle away. But he will never do it while we wait. We must rise up in the strength of our faith, and say, "The voice of God is calling me, and the hand of God will make the way for me through these seemingly impassable barriers to the lofty heights yonder."

When duty calls we have nothing whatever to do with hindrances and difficulties. It is ours only to obey, even though obedience seem impossible. "I can do all things through

Christ who strengtheneth me." God waits to come to us with divine help. He will not come while we sit still in weakness and fear; but the moment we begin to try to obey his voice, his power begins to flow into our heart. Then, as we go on, he works in us and with us. He prepares the way for us. The obstacle gives way to the pressure of our feet. The gate opens when we put the key of faith into the lock. The river sinks away as we tread the edge of its waters. The mountains are levelled as we move on. We pass to the radiant heights that beckon us, and possess our land flowing with milk and honey, in whose hills are rich treasures.

The secret of the failure, or the poor, meagre attainment, of so many lives lies in the want of bold faith. Men stand on the edge of great possibilities, glorious lands of promise, and wait for God to open the door for them. They wonder why they are shut out of the wide fields into which they see others entering so triumphantly. They even say that the ways of God are not equal, that

life is harder for them than it is for others. They pray that they may get on, and then they wait.

But little comes of their life. They achieve only small results, win only few victories, grow into only feeble strength, accomplish only meagre things for God and their fellows, dying at last with little to show that they have lived. Yet all the while God was waiting for them to go on. There was not a river before them all the years that would not have dwindled to a tiny brooklet if they had gone forward in the venture of heroic faith. There was not an obstacle in all their course which seemed to make progress impossible for them that would not have yielded, if they had gone on quietly and firmly as if there were no obstacle.

We do not know how often we are missing the richest blessings of the divine love because of our over-waiting for God. These blessings are within our reach — God is waiting and longing to give them to us; but, misunderstanding our duty, thinking that the

way is not yet open for us, we continue waiting, when we ought to press forward in bold confidence to take what is ours.

Not in common attainment and achievement only, but also in spiritual life and culture, does this truth apply. Several of our Lord's miracles illustrate this. For example, when the ten lepers cried to him for mercy, he bade them go and show themselves to the priests. This seemed indeed a strange command to give. The law required that when lepers were actually cured they were to show themselves to their priest to obtain a certificate of healing. If these lepers had been cured, their duty would have been to visit the priest. But although there was not as yet a trace of any change in their flesh, the lepers obeyed, setting out at once to find their priests. "And as they went, they were cleansed." If they had waited to see the cleansing come in their flesh before they would start, they would never have seen it. God was waiting to cleanse them; and the moment their faith began to work, the blessing came.

In precisely the same way do the blessings of spiritual life come to us. Every invitation of grace carries in it a promise of mercy and favor. Sinners are invited to come to Christ, and they have the promise of divine life in them when they come. As they take the first steps, the new life begins to flow into their soul. If they waited to get the life before they would obey the call of Christ, they would wait in vain. This would be over-waiting for God. We are invited to follow Christ. As we begin to go after him, the way opens. If we waited for it to open before we would set out after him, it would not open at all. It will open only to faith. We are commanded to take up certain duties. It seems to us that we cannot do them. We say we have no strength. But as we take them up, skill and strength come to us in a mysterious way, and the duties are easy. We are set to fight certain battles. We say we can never be victorious; that we never can conquer these enemies. But as we enter into the conflict, One comes and fights by

our side, and through him we are more than conquerors. But if we had waited, trembling and fearing, for our Helper to come before we would join the battle, we should have waited in vain. This would have been the over-waiting of unbelief.

So it is in all life. We have a duty of waiting for God; but we must beware lest we over-wait, and miss the blessing and the good that God himself is waiting to give us, as our faith claims it.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ONLY SAFE COMMITTAL.

"We see not, know not; all our way
Is night; with thee alone is day.
From out the torrent's troubled drift,
Above the storm our prayer we lift,
Thy will be done!

We take with solemn thankfulness
Our burden up, nor ask it less;
And count it joy that even we
May suffer, serve, or wait for thee.
Thy will be done!"

In one of the psalms is a sentence of committal, the full force of which is not usually noted. The words read: —

"Into thine hand I commend my spirit:
Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth."

This is commonly quoted as if it referred to dying. Indeed, Jesus, when he was dying, used almost these exact words, and thousands of believers since have done the same. But

as originally written the committal was for life, not for death. The writer of the psalm was facing the experiences of human struggle and danger, and put his life into the hands of his Redeemer.

We may commit our life into the hands of God in the fullest and most far-reaching sense. This is what we really do in the act of believing on Christ. Perhaps the conception of Christ as a living person, to whose hands we intrust our soul's keeping, is not always as vivid as it might be. There is a sense in which we are saved by the death of Christ; but we need to add to this the truth of the living Christ, who is our personal friend, teacher, guide, keeper, the restorer of our soul, and our helper in all ways. He takes our life, with all its sin, frailty, fault, and peril, and by his power cleanses, renews, transforms, trains, and guides, until at last he presents us faultless before the presence of the divine glory.

Then, not our soul only, but our affairs also, may we commit into the hands of Christ.

Every life is full of experiences which no human wisdom can make clear. Our affairs are forever getting tangled like threads in a child's hands, and the tangles we have no skill to straighten out. We cannot see how anything beautiful or good can come out of our poor living or our feeble striving. Ofttimes our circumstances seem to be unfriendly. Our days are full of disappointments, and our nights' rest is broken by fear and anxieties.

The Christian's privilege in the midst of such experiences is to commit all into the hands of Christ. He can take our broken things, over which we weep bitterly, and build them up into beauty. One of the finest windows in a great cathedral is said to have been made out of the fragments of broken glass which the workmen had thrown away as worthless. A skilful hand gathered them up, and wrought them into lovely form. Christ can take our failures, our mistakes, our follies, even our falls and sins, and make them into beautiful life and character. He can take our tangled threads, and, disentangling them,

weave them into a garment of beauty for us. He can take our disappointments, and change them into divine appointments, so that they shall be radiant paths to blessing and good. It matters not what the burden or the care, if only we will lay it in the hands of Christ, and leave it there, he will transform it into good.

Jesus, when about to leave this world, committed his disciples into the hands of his Father, asking him to keep them in the world's danger and trial. So may the dying parent commit his children, whom he must leave alone, into the hands of God. We may commit our unfinished work into the same hands when we have to drop it from our feeble clasp. We may commit into Christ's hands also the loved ones for whom we pray, for whose salvation our hearts cry out with such agony of love. Long may the answer to our supplications seem to be delayed; but we may still trust — laying our pleading in the hands which the nails pierced on the cross of the world's redemption. We may lay every anxious

thought and wish, everything that to us seems hopeless, everything that seems to have failed, everything that causes us pain or care or sorrow — we may lay everything in the hands of Christ, and leave it there, with the faith of a little child. These broken things, these mere fragments of efforts and attainments and achievements and shattered hopes, — all we may intrust to the great Master of life, knowing that nothing shall be lost.

"A broken song — it had dropped apart
Just as it left the singer's heart,
And was never whispered upon the air,
Only breathed into the vague 'Somewhere.'

A broken prayer — only half said
By a tired child at his trundle-bed;
While asking Jesus his soul to keep,
With parted lips he fell fast asleep.

A broken life — hardly half told
When it dropped the burden it could not hold.
Of these lives and songs and prayers half done,
God gathers the fragments, every one."

We may also intrust our life itself to the same keeping. Circumstances are but inci-

dents; the real thing about us always is our life itself. The house is not the family. Fire may destroy the building, but the household life is not affected thereby. The body is not the life. Sickness may waste the beauty and the strength, or accident may wound or scar the flesh; but the life within, that which thinks, feels, loves, suffers, wills, and aspires, remains unharmed. It matters little what becomes of our money, our clothes, our house, our property, or even of our personal happiness; but it is of infinite importance what happens to our life itself. The problem of living in this world is to pass through life's vicissitudes without being harmed by them, growing ever into more and more radiant and beautiful life, whatever our circumstances and experiences may be.

It is in this phase of our living that we most of all need Christ. We cannot escape meeting temptation; but we are so to meet it as not to be hurt by it, coming from it rather with new strength and new radiancy of soul. We cannot find a path in which no sorrow shall

come into our life, but we are to pass through sorrow without having our life marred by it. None but Christ can keep us thus unhurt amid the manifold perils through which we must move continually. The gentlest, purest, strongest mother cannot fold her child in her bosom so securely that it will be absolutely safe from the world's power of evil.

Few thoughts are more serious than that of the responsibility under which we come when we take another life into our hands. A baby is born, and laid in the mother's arms. In its feebleness it says to her in its first cry, "Into thy hands I commit my life. Guard and keep me. Teach me my lessons. Train my powers. Hide me from the world's harm. Prepare me for life and for eternity." Yet any mother who thinks at all knows that she herself cannot do all this for her child.

Perhaps we do not often think of the responsibility of being a friend. We like to have persons come to us, and trust us, and love us, and look to us for whatever friendship can give or do. But we do not think what

it means to take a soul in this way into our influence, to become friend, for example, to a young life that turns to us with confidence and yearning. It is a sacred trust. We are responsible for all we do that may influence, impress, color, or sway our new friend's life. Are we worthy to be friend to this young life? Are our hands clean? Are they gentle? Are they strong? Will the life be helped, inspired, beautified, enriched, lifted near to God by our friendship?

Must we not confess that Christ is the only one to whom any life may be committed with absolute confidence that no hurt shall ever come to it? No most humane surgeon has such skill in binding up wounds or in treating sickness as has the Lord Jesus Christ in dealing with our lives. All the best things in friendship are in him. "The chief want in life," a great thinker has said, "is somebody who shall make us do the best we can." Such a friend is Christ. He never makes life easy for us, as sometimes we mistakenly do for those we love, hurting them, weakening their

character, by our overhelp. Christ inspires us always to do our best.

Whatever sweet human friendships we may form, and whatever these may mean to us, it is only by committing our life into the hands of Christ that there ever can be absolute safety in this world so full of evil, or that our life ever can reach its best possibilities.

We may, then, also make this same committal of our life when we come to what we call dying. That was what Jesus did: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." It is hard for us to see our friends die. It seems to us that they will miss our love, and that death will somehow harm them. But we are mistaken. They will be kept as no mother ever kept a child, and some day we shall get them back again in radiant beauty.

"We are quite sure
That he will give them back —
Bright, pure, and beautiful;
We know he will but keep
Our own and his until we fall asleep;

We know he does not mean
To break the strands reaching between
The Here and There.
He does not mean — though heaven be fair —
To change the spirits entering there;
That they forget
The eyes upraised and wet,
The lips too still for prayer
The mute despair.
He will not take
The spirits which he gave, and make
The glorified so new
That they are lost to me and you.
I do believe
They will receive
Us, you and me, and be so glad
To meet us, that when most I would grow sad,
I just begin to think about the gladness,
And the day
When they shall tell us all about the way
That they have learned to go —
Heaven's pathways show.
My lost, my own, and I
Shall have so much to see together by and by.
I do believe that just the same sweet face,
But glorified, is waiting in the place
Where we shall meet, if only I
Am counted worthy in that by and by.
I do believe that God will give a sweet surprise
To tear-stained, saddened eyes,

And that his heaven will be
Most glad, most tided through with joy
For you and me,
As we have suffered most.
God never made
Spirit for spirit, answering shade for shade,
And placed them side by side —
So wrought in one, though separate, mystified,
And meant to break
The quivering threads between.
When we shall wake,
I am quite sure we will be very glad
That for a little while we were so sad."

We need never fear to commit our loved ones into the hands of Christ when they leave us; nor need we be afraid, when to us the hour of departing comes, to breathe out our spirit into the same strong, gentle hands of eternal love.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BEATITUDE FOR SORROW.

"God never would send you the darkness
If he felt you could bear the light;
But you would not cling to his guiding hand
If the way were always bright,
And you would not care to walk by faith,
Could you always walk by sight.

Then nestle your hand in your Father's,
And sing, if you can, as you go;
Your song may cheer some one behind you
Whose courage is sinking low;
And, well, if your lips do quiver—
God will love you better so."

A GREAT preacher has said, "It is worth our thought how small that audience must be that would assemble, life through, to listen to a gospel that said nothing to sufferers, nothing to sorrow." An old theological professor said to his students, "Never go through a service without some word, in sermon or prayer, for the troubled; for in every con-

gregation there will be at least one heart hungering for comfort."

The gospel is for all experiences. The religion of Christ is for our times of gladness as well as for our days of trouble. It is not merely a lamp to shine in our dark nights. We never need Christ more than when the world is shining upon us. Yet Christianity is peculiarly a religion for sorrow. This is one reason the Bible is so precious to men and women everywhere. It is full of sympathy. On every page it has words of comfort. In every chapter we feel the heart-beat of divine love. The preacher who has no comfort in his sermons will soon find his congregation melting away. Longfellow once said that a sermon was no sermon to him if he could not hear the heart-beat in it. Poor, aching hearts will not long come to a ministry in which they do not find warm sympathy, in which they do not feel continually the heart-beat of Christ.

Many people must think at first reading that Christ's beatitude for mourners is a

strange one: "Blessed are they that mourn." Blessed means something very good, very beautiful. To be blessed is to be happy, prosperous, favored. But if we are asked to name the people who are happiest and most favored of all we know, we would not likely name those who are passing through affliction. How can the strange paradox of Christ's beatitude be explained?

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." There must be something very precious, very rich, in God's comfort, that makes it worth while even to have sorrow and loss to get it. What is comfort? Some of us think we are comforting people when we sit down beside them in their trouble, and sympathize with them, as we call it, going down into the depths with them, but doing nothing to lift them up. When will good people learn that their errand to their friends in sorrow is to help them, to put cheer into their hearts? To comfort, in the Bible sense, is to strengthen. We comfort others truly when we make them stronger to endure, when

we enable them to pass through their sorrow victoriously. That is the way Christ comforts. He does not merely sit down beside troubled ones and enter into their experiences. He does sympathize with them, but it is that he may make them strong to endure.

Christ comforts in bereavement by showing us what that which we call death really is to the Christian. If we could see what it is that happens to our beloved one when he leaves us, we could not weep. There is a beautiful story of a boy whose young sister was dying. He had heard that if he could secure but a single leaf from the tree of life that grew in the garden of God, the illness could be healed. He set out to find the garden, and implored the angel sentinel to let him have one leaf. The angel asked the boy if he could promise that his sister should never be sick any more if his request were granted, and that she should never be unhappy, nor do wrong, nor be cold or hungry, nor be treated harshly. The boy said he could not promise. Then the angel opened the gate a little way, bidding

the child to look into the garden for a moment, to have one glimpse of its beauty.

"Then, if you still wish it," said the angel, "I will myself ask the King for a leaf from the tree of life to heal your sister."

The child looked in; and, after seeing all the wondrous beauty and blessedness within the gates, he said softly to the angel, "I will not ask for the leaf now. There is no place in all this world so beautiful as that. There is no friend so kind as the Angel of Death. I wish he would take me too."

If we could look in at the gate through which our loved ones pass when they leave us, we should be comforted. "Absent from the body," they are "at home with the Lord." Dying is translation; it is passing into blessed life.

> "Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments."

Another comfort in bereavement comes in the assurance of God's unchanging love. When his children were dead, Job gave expression to

his faith in the words: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." It was the same Lord who gave and who took away, and the same love. It does not seem so to us. But if we could see all things as God sees them, we should find the same goodness in the one as in the other. Some day we shall see it. Jesus said, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Faith accepts this promise, and believes that whatever God does must be right. In this confidence it abides, and, believing, finds comfort and peace.

Comfort in bereavement comes also through our memories of our beloved ones. The first shock of sorrow ofttimes leaves the heart stunned, like a young bird thrown out of its nest by a wild storm sweeping through the branches. For a time all is confusion. Even faith seems for a while to be staggered. One sees nothing but the desolation of grief. Every beautiful thing appears to be shattered. No voices of comfort are heard in the soul's anguish. Even God seems far off. In the amazement and bewilderment it appears that

life never can have any joy again, that its old tasks never can be taken up. All the memories are memories of loss and sorrow. The beautiful years of life, with their love and their gentle ministries, are hidden for the time in the one great sense of bereavement.

But, as the days pass, this bitterness also passes. A gentle hand takes up the little bird, and helps it back to its nest again. The anguish is soothed by the assurance of divine love that creeps into the heart. Comfort comes as the morning comes after the night, and at last the sorrowing one feels —

> "Into the darkness creep a gentle hand,
> And through the silence search a loving voice;
> And then a presence, sweet, pervasive, soft,
> Brooding above the longing and the need, —
> And this at last is shadow of God's wing."

In these after days, when the poignancy of the grief is past, when the light has begun to come again, and when the grace of God has reappeared full of love, the heart begins to find comfort in precious memories of those who are gone. Death sweeps away the faults,

the flaws, the imperfections, which were so apparent in our friends when they were close beside us, and brings out in them all the beautiful things, only half understood, half perceived, when they were with us. Forgotten kindnesses of years past are remembered when friends are gone. A thousand fragments of beauty in character and conduct — hidden, unnoticed before — memory now gathers up. The result is a transfigured life, in which all that was good, true, lovely, and worthy has a place.

A middle-aged man said recently that his mother had been far more to him the ten years she had been in heaven than the ten years before her departure. A woman of advanced years said that her first baby, which had been with Christ for fifty years, had been a softening, refining, spiritualizing, upward-drawing influence in her life all those years. There is no doubt that in thousands of cases our friends are more to us in heaven than ever they were while they were with us. The influence of glorified children on parents and homes is very marked. A baby in heaven

means more to many fathers and mothers than a baby in their arms. It is a magnet to draw their hearts heavenward.

When they began to build a great wire suspension bridge over a wide river, a kite was sent across with the first fine wire. This was fastened, and then on it other wires were drawn across, until the great bridge hung in the air, and thousands were passing over it. From many a home a loved one, borne to heaven, carries the first heavenward thought of a worldly household. But from that moment, and on that slender thread, their thoughts, affections, and longings go continually heavenward, until there is a broad golden bridge hung between their home and God's house, and prayer and love are constantly passing over.

There is no doubt that sorrow is one of the secrets of the truest, deepest home happiness. Perhaps few marriages reach their sweetest, fullest blending until the wedded pair stand hand in hand beside the grave of a loved member of their home circle.

The beatitude of Christ shows that the blessing of sorrow lies in the comfort. A large portion of the Bible is comfort which can become ours only through sorrow. We can say, "Blessed is night, for it reveals to us the stars." In the same way we can say, "Blessed is sorrow, for it reveals God's comfort." The floods washed away home and mill, — all the poor man had in the world. But as he stood on the scene of his loss, after the water had subsided, broken-hearted and discouraged, he saw something shining in the bank which the waters had washed bare. "It looks like gold," he said. It was gold. The flood which had beggared him made him rich. So it is ofttimes in life. Sorrow strips off loved possessions, but reveals the treasures of the love of God. We are sure, at least, that every sorrow that comes brings to us a gift from God, a blessing which may be ours if we will accept it. Sorrow should always be treated hospitably and reverently, as a messenger from heaven. It comes not as an enemy, but as a friend. We may reject it,

just as we may reject any other messenger from God, and miss the blessing. But if we welcome it in Christ's name, it will leave in heart and home a gift of love.

Clouds gather in the sky with ominous threatening. But they pass, and leave their rich treasure of rain. Then the flowers are more fragrant, the grass is greener, and all living things are lovelier. Sorrow comes. There is agony in the heart. There is crape on the door. There is a new grave in God's acre. But all hearts are softer. Love is tenderer. Prayers are more fervent. There is more of heaven in the household life. The cloud has left its treasures of rain. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

"I heard an old farmer talk one day,
Telling his listeners how,
In the wide, new country far away,
The rainfall follows the plough.

'As fast as they break it up, you see,
And turn the heart to the sun,
As they open the furrows deep and free,
And the tillage is begun;

The earth grows mellow, and more and more
It holds and sends to the sky
A moisture it never had before
When its face was hard and dry.

And so, whenever the ploughshares run,
The clouds run overhead;
And the soil that works and lets in the sun,
With water is always fed.'

I wonder if that old farmer knew
The half of his simple word,
Or guessed the message that heavenly true
Within it was hidden and heard?

It fell on my ear by chance that day,
But the gladness lingers now,
To think it is always God's dear way
That the rainfall follows the plough."

CHAPTER XVIII.

BLESSINGS OF BEREAVEMENT.

"The past is always holy — every heart
Holds something that has grown to be divine;
What haunts there are where memory walks apart!
Each common place has some invisible shrine.

And every heart that throbs, and every eye
Has some strange tenderness towards something lost —
Some secret spell, chance words will oft apply,
Melting their fountains from a winter's frost."

At first we would be disposed to say that no blessings can come out of bereavements. But the grace of God has such wondrous power, that even from the saddest desolating of a home good may come.

One blessing from the breaking of a home circle is that thus we are led to think of our better home. If things went always smoothly with us here, if no flowers ever faded, if there were never any interruption in our earthly joys, we should not think of the enduring

things of the invisible world. It is when earthly good fails us that we learn to set our affections on heavenly good. Many a man has never found his home in God till his human nest was desolated by the storms of sorrow.

A bereavement in a houshold draws all the family closer together. Love never reaches its sweetest and best till it has suffered. Homes which never have been broken may be very happy in love, and very bright with gladness; but, after sorrow has entered as a guest, there is a depth in the love which was never experienced before. It is a new marriage when young parents stand side by side by the coffin of their first-born. Grief is like a sacrament to those who share it with Christ beside them. It brings them into a holier fellowship than they have ever known in love's unclouded days. Many homes have been saved from harshness of spirit and sharpness of speech, from pride and coldness and heedlessness, by a sorrow which broke in upon the careless life. The tones were softer after that. There was a new gentleness in all the life. Most of us

need the chastening of pain to bring out the best of our love.

A bereavement ofttimes proves a blessing to those who remain, through the laying upon them of new burdens and responsibilities. Many a son has become a man the day he saw his father's form lowered into the grave, and then turned away to take up the mantle which had fallen at his feet, — the care of his mother, and the management of affairs. Many a thoughtless girl has become a serious woman, as in a day, when she returned from her mother's funeral, and put her hand to the duties that now must be hers if the home is to be maintained. Many a man has grown almost instantly into beautiful gentleness, when the taking away of the mother of his little children compelled him to be to them henceforth both father and mother. Heretofore he had left all this care to the mother. He had never done more than play with his baby when it was happy. Now he has to be nurse to it, soothing it when it cries, crooning lullabies to hush it to sleep, often walking the floor with

it nights. It is hard, but the new care brings out in him beautiful qualities never suspected before. Many a woman has been transformed from weakness to strength by the bereavement which took her husband from her side, leaving her with little children to bring up. It seemed as if the burden would crush her; but it only brought out noble things in her soul, — courage, faith, energy, skill, love, — as she took up her new double responsibility. Thus the breaking of a home is often the making of the lives on which the sorrow falls.

Few bereavements cause more disappointment than when little children die. But even in these there are consolations. That the baby came was a blessing. Life was never the same in the home after that, never could be the same; it had in it a new element of blessing. Then its stay, whether it was for one day, one month, or a year, was like the tarrying of a heavenly messenger. Nothing can ever rob the home of the benedictions it left there in its brief stay. Ofttimes the influence of

the beautiful life even for a few days or weeks is greater in the home and upon the lives of the household than that of another child who stays and grows up to mature years.

This is one of the sorrows which in the Christian home is changed into joy by the grace of Christ. It is never a bitter grief; it has no thorns in it. There is never any anxiety about the baby that is in heaven, as there is ofttimes about the child that lives and grows up amid the world's temptations. The mother of a dead baby knows any hour where her child is, in whose keeping, and never has any fear for it. Thoughts of it are benedictions which fall even out of heaven into her heart.

In one of her poems Mrs. Browning suggests the blessing of the memory of a little child in the home, out of which it had been taken:—

> "God lent him and takes him," you sigh,—
> Nay, there let me break with your pain:
> God's generous in giving, say I,
> And the thing which he gives, I deny
> That he can ever take back again.
> . . . . . .

So look up, friends! You who indeed
Have possessed in your house a sweet piece
Of the heaven which men strive for, must need
Be more earnest than others are, speed
Where they loiter, persist where they cease.

You know how one angel smiles there.
Then courage! 'Tis easy for you
To be drawn by a single gold hair
Of that curl, from earth's storm and despair
To the safe place above us.

Another blessing of bereavement is the preparation for sympathy and helpfulness which comes through sorrow. We have to learn to be gentle, — most of us, at least. We are naturally selfish, self-centred, and thoughtless. Sympathy is not a natural grace of character, even in most refined natures. Of course we all feel a momentary tenderness when a friend or a neighbor is in any trouble. Few things in literature are more touching than some lines of James Whitcomb Riley, addressed to one who had lost a child: —

Let me come in where you sit weeping, — ay,
Let me, who have not any child to die,
Weep with you for the little one whose love
I have known nothing of.

The little arms that slowly, slowly loosed
Their pressure round your neck; the hands you used
To kiss. Such arms — such hands I never knew.
May I not weep with you?

Fain would I be of service — say something,
Between the tears, that would be comforting, —
But ah! so sadder than yourself am I,
Who have no child to die.

There is a sympathy which every gentle heart feels with sorrow. We cannot pass a house with crape on the door, and not, for an instant at least, experience a subduing, quieting sentiment. But the power to enter really into sympathy with one in grief or pain comes only through a schooling of our own heart in some way. While a home is unbroken, the sorrows of other homes do not find responsive echoes in the love that dwells there. True, "love knows the secret of grief;" but even love that has not suffered cannot fully understand the heart's pain. The mother who has never lost a child cannot deeply comfort another mother, sitting by her little one's coffin. But when a home has been broken,

its inmates have a new power of helpfulness. Crape on a neighbor's door means more after that. Mrs. Paull never wrote any truer words than in her "Mater Dolorosa," written after she had laid her own baby away amid the white blossoms: —

Because of one small, low-laid head all crowned
With golden hair,
Forevermore all fair young brows to me
A halo wear;
I kiss them reverently. Alas! I know
The pain I bear.

Because of dear but close-shut, holy eyes
Of heaven's own blue,
All little eyes do fill my own with tears
Whate'er their hue;
And motherly I gaze their innocent,
Clear depths into.

Because of little pallid lips, which once
My name did call,
No childish voice in vain appeal upon
My ears doth fall;
I count it all my joy their joys to share
And sorrows small.

Because of little dimpled hands
Which folded lie,

All little hands henceforth to me do have
A pleading cry;
I clasp them as they were small wandering birds
Lured home to fly.

Because of little death-cold feet, for earth's
Rough roads unmeet,
I'd journey leagues to save from sin or harm
Such little feet,
And count the lowliest service done for them
So sacred — sweet!

Thus it is that sorrow in our own home makes all the world kin to our hearts. An emptied heart is a wonderful interpreter of others' griefs. The power to be a true helper of others, a binder-up of broken hearts, a comforter of sorrow, is the most divine of all enduements; surely, then, it is worth while to pay any price of pain or suffering to receive the divine anointing to such sacred ministry. It was in suffering that Jesus was prepared to be in the fullest sense and in the deepest measure our sympathizing Friend.

These are some of the blessings which come from the heart of God into earth's broken families when Christ is guest there. We are

sure always that there is deep, true sympathy with us in heaven when we are in grief — for was not God's home broken too? He gave his only begotten Son, that into this world's darkened homes might come blessing and healing.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THEY STAY WITH US.

"So close heaven lies that when my sight is clear,
I think I see the gleaming strand;
I know I feel that those who've gone from here
Come near enough to touch my hand.
I often think but for our veilèd eyes,
We should find that heaven right 'round about us lies."

DEATH is ever bearing away the fresh and fair and beautiful ones of earth, and leaving hearts bleeding, and homes desolate. Apart from the religion of Christ, there is no light in the darkness of bereavement. The best that philosophy can do is to try to forget the grief. Science can do nothing better. But the word of God lights the lamps of true consolation in the gloom of Christian sorrow.

In Christ we never really lose our friends who pass away from us in the vanishing of death. They go from our sight, but they are ours still. They were never so lovely in life,

when they walked before us, as they are now, when only love's eyes can see them. They live in our memory, in our very soul; and it is in transfigured beauty that they dwell with us. We do not think any more of the faults and blemishes which we used to see in them so clearly when they were with us; death's hand has swept all these away. At the same time every lovely feature in them shines out now like a star in the sky at night, and all the good things they ever did are remembered, and appear radiant as angel ministries. Such strange power has love under the quickening touch of death's hand.

There is another way in which our beloved ones stay with us after they have vanished from sight in death's mists. Everything they have touched becomes in a certain sense sacramental. Their names are written everywhere. They have left part of themselves, as it were, on each familiar thing or scene with which in life they were associated. Wherever we move we are reminded of them. Here is a path where their feet walked. Here is a tree under

which they sat. Here is a book they read, with the pencil marks indicating the thoughts that pleased them. Here is a garment their hands made, or a picture they painted, or some bit of work they did. About the house everything is sacred because of the memories it awakens.

The friends are not altogether gone from us who are brought back so vividly to our memory by the things and the places amid which they once walked. Mrs. Margaret E. Sangster has written tenderly of this staying of our friends with us in the familiar scenes on which they left the touch of their life: —

They never quite leave us, our friends who have passed
Through the shadows of death to the sunlight above;
A thousand sweet memories are holding them fast
To the places they blessed with their presence and love.

The work which they left, and the books which they read,
Speak mutely, though still with an eloquence rare;
And the songs that they sung, and the dear words that they said,
Yet linger and sigh on the desolate air.

Nor do we lose altogether the influence upon us of those who have passed from us. True, we hear no more the whisper of warning, the loving counsel, the chiding when we have done wrong, the urgent, inspiriting word when our courage has failed us, the commendation when we have done well. Yet, in a sense, the influence on us of our friends who have gone is still very potent. Many a son has been saved from ruin by the memory of a mother's pale face, speaking without words its loving entreaty and its earnest warning. Many persons are urged to high endeavors and to noble attainments and achievements by the thoughts of their dear ones dwelling deep in the holy peace and joy of God. A mother who for a year had had a precious little child in heaven said that she had never known such a year of calm, restful peace. She believed in the actual existence of her darling in the blessedness of heaven, and the realizing of this had kept her own heart in quiet confidence amid all life's cares and trials. Even her sorrow she had forgotten; it had been

swallowed up, like the night's darkness in the morning's glory, by the triumphant assurance that her little one was living with Christ. These thoughts are well expressed in the same poem from which quotation has already been made: —

> And oft when alone, and oft in the throng,
> Or when evil allures us, or sin draweth nigh,
> A whisper comes gently, "Nay, do not the wrong,"
> And we feel that our weakness is pitied on high.
>
> We toil at our tasks in the burden and heat
> Of life's passionate noon. They are folded in peace.
> It is well. We rejoice that their heaven is sweet,
> And one day for us all the bitter will cease.

There is yet another sense in which our departed Christian friends stay with us after they have vanished from earth. We know that they are still living, that they still remember us and still love us, though we are in a sense separated from them. Love is stronger than death; and love binds us and them in close and holy bonds, though they have passed over the valley, and we yet stay on this side. Through the longest years this

tie is not destroyed. We do not forget our friends; they do not forget us. Thus we have them still, and never quite lose them in the years that we have to walk without them. Then by and by we shall have them again in blessed reality, when death touches us in turn, and we pass over into the same glorious joy in which they are dwelling.

A large part of the blessed hope of heaven is its reunions. The Bible gives us many glimpses of the glory and beauty of the home that awaits us. We are told of streets of gold, of gates of pearl, of a river of the water of life, of a crystal sea — all that earth can find of splendor is brought into the picture to heighten our conception of the glories of heaven. But that which makes heaven dear to those who have loved ones there is not so much the promise of all this splendor of beauty, as the hope of again getting with the dear friends who are in the midst of all this incomparable beauty. As the Rev. W. C. Gannett puts it, "the dear togetherness" is the sweetest thing in the hope of heaven.

I dreamed of Paradise — and still,
Though sun lay soft on vale and hill,
And trees were green and rivers bright,
The one dear thing that made delight
By sun or stars or Eden weather,
Was just that we two were together.

I dreamed of heaven — with God so near!
The angels trod the shining sphere,
And each was beautiful; the days
Were choral work, were choral praise:
And yet in heaven's far-shining weather
The best was still — we were together!

Do we get the most and the best possible in our bereavements from the truths which Christ brings to us? Does not our faith's vision often become so dim with our tears that we lose sight altogether of the immortality into which our Christian dead have entered? We say we believe in the endless life; but too often it is such a shadowy, nebulous thought which we have of it that no comfort comes to us from it. We really mourn our departed friends as lost, while we go on saying in our creed, "I believe in the life everlasting." Yet we are robbing our

own hearts of the comforts that God has provided when we do not take to ourselves the blessed hopes and consolations of our Christian faith. We really hold no living friends with such a sure clasp as that which makes our sainted ones ours. There are many ways of losing living friends; but those who have passed into God's keeping are forever beyond the possibility of being lost to us. Whittier has written in "Snowbound:"—

> And yet, dear heart, remembering thee,
> Am I not richer than of old?
> Safe in thy immortality,
> What change can reach the wealth I hold?
> What chance can mar the pearl and gold
> Thy love hath left in trust with me?
> And while in life's late afternoon,
> Where cool and long the shadows grow,
> I walk to meet the night that soon
> Shall shape and shadow overflow,
> I cannot feel that thou art far
> Since near at need the angels are;
> And when the sunset gates unbar,
> Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
> And, white against the evening star,
> The welcome of thy beckoning hand?

CHAPTER XX.

THE HALLOWING OF OUR BURDEN.

"Give me the grace to bear my burden so
That men may learn the secret of my power,
And meet each trouble with their face aglow,
And voice thy praises in the midnight hour;
For when our helplessness cries unto thee,
Thy power descends in Christ to set us free."

We miss much by not giving heed to the marginal readings in our reference Bibles. Ofttimes a new light falls upon a verse or a word, when we have noted the alternative rendering which is thus given. These marginal readings give us other shades of meaning in the original words, and ofttimes suggest a hidden sense which is very beautiful.

Take a single example. Few Bible words are more frequently quoted than that in one of the psalms, which says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The privilege is a very precious one. We

all have our burden. No matter how happy any one is, he is bearing some weight of care, or sorrow, or responsibility. Continually we find our load too heavy for our own unaided strength. We feel that we cannot carry it without help. Human love comes up close beside us, willing, if it were possible, to take the burden from our shoulder, and carry it for us. But this is not possible. "Every man must bear his own burden." Most of life's loads are not transferable.

Take pain, for instance. No tenderest, truest love can bear our pain for us, or even bear any smallest part of it. Or take sorrow. Close as human friendship may come to us when our heart is breaking with grief, it cannot take from us any least portion of the anguish we suffer as we meet bereavement. Or take struggle with temptation. We can get no human help in it, and must pass through the struggle alone.

Life has this peculiarity, that its experiences are its own, without any possibility of transference to any other, or even of sharing in

any actual way by another. This is one of the mysteries of being. Each must live his life alone. Help can come to us only at a few points, and there only in matters that are external. Our friends may send fuel for our fire, or bread for our hunger, or give us money to pay our debts; but the burdens of life's deep personal experience, of whatever sort they may be, no one can carry for us, or even really share with us.

It will be noticed, too, that God himself does not promise to bear our burden for us. So much is it an essential and inseparable part of our life that even the divine love cannot relieve us of its weight. Or if we say it must be possible, God being omnipotent, for him to take our load off our shoulders if he would, we may say at least that this is not the way of divine love.

The teaching from all this is that we cannot hope to have our life-burden lifted off. Help cannot come to us in the way of relief. The prayer to be freed from the load cannot be answered. The assurance is, not that the

Lord will take our burden when we cast it upon him, lifting it away from our shoulder; it is, instead, a promise that while we bear our burden, whatever it may be, the Lord will sustain us. He will give us strength to continue faithful, to go on with our doing of God's will, unimpeded, unhindered, by the pressure of the load we must carry.

Here it is that the light breaks upon this divine word from the margin. Glancing at the reference we see that the word "gift" is set down as an alternative reading. "Cast thy gift upon the Lord." Thus we get the teaching that our burden is a gift of God to us. At once the thing, which a moment ago seemed so oppressive in its weight, so unlovely in its form, is hallowed and transformed. We had thought it an evil, whose effect upon us could be only hurtful, hindering our growth, marring our happiness. But now we see that it is another of God's blessings, not evil, but good, designed not to hurt us, nor to impede our progress, but to help us onward. The whole aspect of our burden is changed as we

see it in the new light that shines from the margin.

A gift from a friend bears love. It is a token and pledge of love. God sent this gift to us because he loves us. It is a memento of divine affection. It may be hard for us to understand this. It may be a burden of pain, and pain seems so opposed to comfort that we cannot see how it can be a gift of love. It may be sorrow; and sorrow never for the present seems to be joyous, but always grievous. It may be loss, — the stripping from us of life's pleasant things, leaving emptiness and desolation. How such burdens as these can be tokens of divine affection, God's gift of love, it is hard for us to conceive. Yet we know that God is our Father, and that his love for us never fails. Whatever comes from his hand to us must be sent in love.

If our burden is a gift of love, it must have good in it for us, some blessing. No doubt this is true of everything God sends to us. Susan Coolidge writes of the messenger who comes in the name of the Lord: —

Who is this that cometh in the Lord's dear name?
Wan and drooping on his road, very faint and lame;
Pale brow overshadowed, eyes all quenched and dim —
Is it Pain who cometh? Did the Lord send *him?*

Who is this that cometh in the Lord's dear name?
Meeting never praises, only tears and blame;
Mourning veil to hide him, eyes which tears o'erbrim —
Is it Grief who cometh? Did the Lord send *him?*

Who is this that cometh in the Lord's dear name?
In his strange and searching gaze burns a pallid flame;
Mournful flowers crown his head, terrible and grim —
Is it Death who cometh? Did the Lord send *him?*

Never messenger shall come if he be not sent;
We will welcome one and all, since the Lord so meant;
Welcome Pain or Grief or Death, saying with glad acclaim,
"Blessed be all who come to us in the Lord's dear name!"

The world offers attractive things, — pleasures, gains, promises of honor and delight. To the eye of sense these appear to be life's best things. But too often they enfold bitterness and hurt, the fruit of evil. At the bottom of the cup are dregs of poison. On the other hand, the things that God gives appear

sometimes unattractive, undesirable, even repulsive. We shrink from accepting them. But they enfold, in their severe and unpromising form, the blessings of divine love.

We know how true this is of life's pains and sorrows. Though grievous to sense, they leave in the heart that receives them with faith and trust the fruits of good. Whatever our burden may be, it is God's gift, and brings to us some precious thing from the treasury of divine love. This fact makes it sacred to us. Not to accept it is to thrust away from us a blessing sent from heaven.

We need, therefore, to treat most reverently the things in our life which we call burdens. We cherish the gift of a friend. We do not thrust it from us, or fling it away. If we were to find to-day, lying in the street, trampled under foot, something which we had given a dear one yesterday, a gift of our love, we should be sorely hurt by the dishonor thus put upon us. Shall we treat our heavenly Father's gift to us with a disregard we would not show to a human friend's gift? Shall we

weary of it? Shall we consider it an evil, something we would be rid of? If it brings present pain or trial, or comes in the form of a cross, shall we complain of its weight? Shall we not rather look upon it with love, and cherish it with gladness, as a mark of honor bestowed upon us?

Here is a quotation from a distinguished preacher which illustrates the esteem in which all true men hold gifts of love: "I have in my house a beautiful half-bust, a figure of myself, sculptured from the purest Carrara marble by one who, though not well known as such, is no mean artist. It was a gift to me from the sculptor; but I value it all the more because it was fashioned by the plastic fingers of my own daughter, chiselled with her own hands, and wrought out as an expression of an abiding love, when I was thousands of miles away from home for a long stretch of time. Coming to me on my return home as a gift from her, that bit of marble, the work of my own child's fingers, and the suggestion of her genius and love, was more precious to me

than if Michael Angelo or Phidias had risen from the dead from Greece or Rome to have wrought that portrait for me."

With like affection should we regard the gifts of God to us. This is easy for us so long as these gifts come to us in pleasant form — things that give joy to us. But with no less love and gratitude should we receive and cherish God's gifts which come in forbidding form. It is the same love that sends the one and also the other. The one is no less good than the other. There is blessing as truly in the gift of pain or loss or trial as in the gift of song and gain and gladness. Whatever God sends we should receive therefore, in confidence, as a gift of his love.

Thus it is that our burden, whatever it may be, is hallowed. It may not always be easy to carry it, for even love sometimes lays heavy burdens on the shoulders of its beloved. A wise father does not seek always to make life easy for his child. Nothing could be more unkind. He would have his child grow strong, and, therefore, he refuses to take away the

hard task. God is too loving and kind, too true a father, to give us only easy things. He makes the burden heavy that we may become strong in bearing it. But he is always near; and he gives us the help we need, that we may never faint beneath it. Then we may always know that our burden is our Father's gift to us.

"To every one on earth
God gives a burden to be carried down
The road that lies between the cross and crown:
No lot is wholly free,
He giveth one to thee.

Thy burden is God's gift,
And it will make the bearer calm and strong;
Yet, lest it press too heavily and long,
He says, 'Cast it on me,
And it shall easy be.'"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE COST OF HELPFULNESS.

Christ gave all rest, and had no resting-place;
He healed each pain, yet lived in sore distress;
Deserved all good, yet lived in great disgrace;
Gave all hearts joy, himself in heaviness;
Suffered them live, by whom himself was slain;
Lord, who can live to see such love again?

COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE.

EVERY blessing that comes to us is made sacred by its cost. To us it may be given freely; but, before it could be given, a price was paid for it. One cannot be truly helpful to another save through a consuming of self. Thus the healings wrought by Jesus drew upon his own life. Once, when a poor sick woman had touched the hem of Christ's garment, he said, "Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." Life went out from him to become healing in the woman. The same was true in all Christ's

other healings. It cost him something to heal the sick.

When we think of it, this is the law of all helpfulness. Anything that is of any real value to us has cost somewhere, in toil or sacrifice or suffering, according to its worth. The blessings of our Christian civilization have come to us through long generations of hardship, endurance, and patient fidelity. Every good thing we enjoy has had somewhere its baptism in blood.

Even in the most common things of daily life we can find price-marks which confirm and attest this law. Every sunbeam that paints a flower or cheers a sick-room costs a portion of the sun's substance, millions of miles away. Every lump of coal that burns on our grate, and every gasjet that flames in our room, is a memorial of a plant or tree that grew and fell uncounted ages since in some primeval forest. The clothing that keeps us warm and adorns our persons, we get at the cost of fields stripped of their cotton and flax, of flocks shorn of their wool, of silkworms' patient spin-

ning out of their own life on the branches of thousands of trees. The food we eat day by day comes to us through the dying of animals which give up their life to nourish ours, through the toil of fruit-gatherers and harvesters in the fields, at the hands of those who on ships and railways carry the breadstuffs over sea and land, and of those who in our own homes prepare our meals for us.

The books we read, and from whose pages we get so many words and thoughts that are helpful, come to us enriched with strength and thought which have come out of other hearts and lives. We read the smooth, graceful sentences with delight. They impart to us instruction, inspiration, comfort, and courage. We give little thought to the writer, or we think of him as one who wields a facile pen; yet it rarely occurs to us to think of him as having endured or suffered loss, pain, or trial, that he might give to us the words in which we find so much pleasure or help. But the truth is that no strengthening thought comes to us from another without cost to the

author, some time, in some way. Men and women must live deeply before they can write helpfully. We cannot teach lessons we have not learned. We may write flowing sentences, saying things we have read or heard, teaching what we have obtained from books, as did the scribes in our Lord's time; but no heart, in its deep human need, will ever receive much real help from such teaching.

The words that Jesus uttered reached the people's souls because he spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes. His words came out of his own heart, throbbing with his own very life-blood. He spoke what he knew, not what he had read or heard. He gave lessons which he had learned in his own deep living. The comforts with which he comforted the sorrowing he had gotten from God in his own sorrow. Every word he spoke was the fruit of some experience in his own life, and bore in itself the mark of its cost.

In human measure the same is true of all those who teach us lessons that help us in life. Mere compilers may aid us through the

good thoughts of others which they gather and bring to us, but they have no help of their own, out of their own life, for us. Only the words which come with the authority of experience can be real bread to our hunger. Only with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God can we really comfort others. Only what we have learned by experience can we truly teach.

Hence it is that the books which truly help us must have cost their authors a great deal more than the mere literary labor of their production. Every word that tells of Christian peace is the fruit of a victory over self in times of sore struggle and trial. Every word that gives comfort tells of sorrows met and endured victoriously. It is the story of his own experience that the author has put into his words. It has been said of poets that what they teach in song they have learned in suffering. All Christians love to read the Hebrew psalms. In every mood and phase of our heart's feelings we find in these psalms the very words in which to frame our thoughts

and utter our desires. The reason is that these psalms are the faithful records of what other men thought and felt when they were in experiences like ours. We walk in the paths which their feet broke for us in the rough wilderness. The blessing we receive comes out of their pain and tears.

So it is in all literature. Great thoughts, wherever we find them, have been born in struggle and anguish. So it is in all life. We cannot be of use in the world without cost. What it costs us nothing to give or to do is not worth the giving or the doing. It is those who sow in tears who reap in joy. It is he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, that shall come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

One of the blessings of suffering or trial is that by it we are fitted for becoming more helpful in our ministry to others. The mother who has lost a little child, and has received the divine consolation, can afterward go to other mothers in like sorrow, and comfort them as she could not have comforted them

before meeting her own grief. Now she knows what their grief is, and can enter into their experience. And that is a vital quality in the consoler's art. Without the power of sympathy we can never give strength or help to one whose heart is breaking. This power one gets through suffering. It was necessary, even for Jesus, when preparing to be our friend and our helper at all our points of need, to enter into real human life, and live it through to the end, just as we have to live it, in order that he might know all human experience. Because of this we are told that in heaven he is now touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and can understand all that we suffer. Those of his people who are led through suffering are also being prepared to become helpers of others in the truest and deepest way.

This is one of the compensations of sorrow which is sometimes overlooked by those who are in trouble. They ask why God is afflicting them, what they have done to deserve such suffering. It would help all such to endure

more patiently were they to remember that God is preparing them to become comforters and guides to others in life's dark paths. One writes:—

Perhaps you have heard of the method strange,
Of violin makers in distant lands,
Who, by breaking and mending with skilful hands,
Make instruments having a wider range
Than ever was possible for them, so long
As they were new, unshattered, and strong.

Have you ever thought when the heart was sad,
When the days seem dark and the nights unending,
That the broken heart, by the Father's mending,
Was made through sorrow a helper glad,
Whose service should lighten more and more
The weary one's burdens as never before?

Then take this simple lesson to heart
When sorrows crowd, and you cannot sing:
To the truth of the Father's goodness cling;
Believe that the sorrow is only a part
Of the wondrous plan that gives through pain
The power to sing more glad refrain.

We ought to be willing to be trained for any service to which God would assign us, whatever the cost of the training may be. We

are all eager for promotion in life. We are honored when our fellow-men trust us with new and important responsibilities. Men are willing to spend years in hard study, and to endure severe discipline, that they may be able to take certain positions in life, and perform duties requiring delicacy and skill. When our great Master desires to prepare us for the highest of all arts, — that of being comforters of others in their trouble, — should we not feel ourselves honored in being called to perform such service for him?

It is a costly promotion, however; for we cannot be a blessing to those who need such ministry until we, too, have suffered, and learned the lesson of comfort for ourselves at God's feet. Hence, if we would be truly and deeply helpful, we must be willing to pay the price of the costly tuition. We must learn deeply and long before we can teach well. We must listen intently before we are ready to speak to others. We must be willing to endure temptation, conflict, and struggle with sin, and to get the victory, before we can be

succorers of those who are tempted. We must be content to suffer, and must learn to suffer patiently, before we can sing the songs of Christian joy and peace in the ears of the weary. Our own hearts must break to fit us for giving comfort, for only with heart's blood can we heal hearts. God is ready always to anoint for the holy office of helping their fellow-men those who can pay the price. One writes of the "making of men:" —

As the mighty poets take
  Grief and pain to build their song:
Even so for every soul,
  Whatsoe'er its lot may be, —
Building, as the heavens roll,
  Something large and strong and free, —
Things that hurt and things that mar
  Shape the man for perfect praise;
Shock and strain and ruin are
  Friendlier than the smiling days.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOVING AND HATING ONE'S LIFE.

Pour out thy love like the rush of a river
Wasting its waters, for ever and ever,
Through the burnt sands that reward not the giver;
  Silent or songful thou nearest the sea.
Scatter thy life as the summer shower's pouring!
What if no bird through the pearl rain is soaring?
What if no blossom looks upward adoring?
  Look to the life that was lavished for thee!

ROSE TERRY COOKE.

OUR Lord's teaching is that only the life that is lost in love is really saved. The illustration is in the little parable of the grain of wheat. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." The teaching is very clear and simple. You may keep your flower-seeds out of the earth to save them from rotting; they will be clean and beautiful, but nothing will come of them. They will be only flower-seeds. If, however,

you put them into the earth, they will seem to perish, but presently there will come up from the dead seeds lovely plants, which in the season will be laden with sweet flowers that will fill the air with their fragrance.

It is easy to find the meaning of the parable in the life of the great Teacher himself. The precious seed fell into the earth and died, but it sprang up in glorious life. Had Jesus saved his life from the cross he might have lived to a ripe old age, making all his years beautiful as the three or four he wrought in such wondrous way among the people. But there would have been no cross lifted up to draw all men to it by its power of love. There would have been no fountain opened to which earth's penitent millions could come with their polluted lives to find cleansing. There would have been no atonement for human guilt, no tasting of death by the Son of God for every man, no bearing by the Lamb of God of the sin of the world. There would have been no broken grave with its victory over death, and eternal life for all who will believe.

It seemed a waste of precious life when Jesus died so young, and in such shame. No doubt his friends spoke together on those days, when he was lying in the grave, of the great loss to the world his dying was. Perhaps they thought he had been imprudent and reckless — almost throwing away his life. Peter may have referred to the time he had spoken so earnestly to his Master, begging him not to go up to Jerusalem to meet death. It seemed to them all that his early death was a sad loss to the world, a wasting of most precious life. But it was not a loss, not a waste. He lost his life, but it became the seed of the world's hope and joy. We understand it now. Christianity is the outcome of that waste. Heaven is the fruit of the Redeemer's sacrifice.

There is more of the lesson. It carries in it the law of life for all of us. Jesus went on to say, "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." All true life must bear the brand of the cross. If we love our life and try to save it, we shall lose it. If we keep

ourselves from the hard service or the costly sacrifice to which duty calls us, we may seem to be gaining by it. We spare ourselves much toil. We have more time for ease, for leisure, for pleasure. We have the money in bank which we might have paid out in helping others. We have saved our life. Yes; but it is a saving which is losing.

There are many applications of this lesson. One has written: —

> If I should come to high renown,
> And compass things divinely great,
> And stand a pillar of the state,
> And count an empire all my own,
>
> And miss myself — I were a child
> That sold himself to slavery
> In that fair castle by the sea
> That glimmered toward his mountain wild.

The finest thing in life is not to make a success of one's career as the world rates success. One may come to high renown, and do deeds divinely fair, as men see them, and become a pillar of the state, winning an empire all one's own, and yet miss himself, lose his

own life. If he does this he makes a mistake in whose shadow his eternity must be spent.

Perhaps we do not always realize how easy it is to make this mistake. We think of large services and great sacrifices, but we have much more to do with small ones, and the principle is the same. Every day brings to us opportunities of saving or losing our life. Here is a duty which is unpleasant, from which we shrink. We are not bound to do it; we can choose either the harder or the easier way, and may decline the duty. We weigh the pros and cons for a little while, and then decide not to do it. Worldly prudence approves our choice. We could not afford to pay the price. We have saved our life. Yes, so it seems. But really we have lost our life.

It applies in the matter of service. A friend or neighbor is in sore need or trouble. We learn of his condition, and it is in our power to relieve him, or at least to give him valuable help. It is not convenient, however, nor easy for us to do it. It will cost us much trouble, perhaps considerable outlay of money or exer-

tion. It will be much easier not to render the service. Yet the law of love says we should help our neighbor. Self answers up and pleads that it is not our matter, that we are not responsible, that we are not bound to do it. After more or less parleying between love and selfishness, we decide not to do the thing he needs. We have saved our money, our labor, our time, but we have lost our life; we have hurt ourselves irreparably.

Both the priest and the Levite in the parable saved themselves a great deal of trouble, time, toil, danger, and sacrifice, by not stopping to help the unfortunate man they came upon on their journey. But, after all, was it a saving that was profitable? It cost the good Samaritan a great deal to stop and care for the wounded man; but who will say that he made a mistake? It was a losing which was a saving.

We all come every day to similar points in life where we must choose whether we will save or lose our life. Duties that are hard are facing us continually; what are we doing

with them? It is less trouble not to take them up. It is easier to be self-indulgent on Sunday or on week-evenings, when we are weary or slightly indisposed or the weather is unfavorable, than it is to go to the church services; so we save our life by putting on wrapper and slippers, and quietly staying at home. It is easier not to be a teacher in the Sunday-school — it ties one down to have to go out in all seasons to meet a class, and besides, there are others who can teach; why shouldn't they do it? It is easier not to give money systematically to God's cause — there are so many things of our own we can spend it for, and it is comfortable to have our bank account grow. It is easier not to be forgiving, but to hold grudges, and remember wrongs done to us, and to let our heart cherish its bitterness; it costs far less struggle just to hate people who have been unkind and hateful to us than to try to love them and repay them with kindness. It is easier not to try to be active in Christian work, taking part in meetings, working on committees, visiting the sick,

but rather to fold our hands and let others do the work. It is easier not to trouble ourselves much about lost souls, just to look after our own life; it is hard to be always feeling the responsibility of the saving of others. It is easier just to think of self, and go on doing business, making money, building up our own fame, marching toward the goal of our ambition, and giving no thought to other people. Other people are in our way; they take our time; they hinder us; they keep us back; it costs to wait for them, or to stop in our busy life to help them.

These are illustrations of what loving our life means. It is taking good care of one's self, keeping one's self back from inconvenient and burdensome serving. We do not need great occasions to give us chances to save or lose our life, we have plenty of chances every common day. Every time we decline a duty of love because it is hard, unpleasant, or costly; every time we choose the way of selfishness; every time we take the easy path to save ourselves trouble, we

are saving our life. But in such saving we are losing. We have things easier, but the loss is irreparable.

Look at the other side. "He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Of course this does not mean that we are to despise our life, or be careless of it, or waste it. Life is sacred. It is God's gift to us, and we must never do anything to harm it, to lessen its value, to mar its beauty. To be reckless of life is a grievous sin. It is not our own — this life we bear about with us; it is God's, and we must cherish it, use it, then answer for it. We must love our own life.

But the teaching is that the first thing must always be our duty — that to which God calls us. To love one's life over-well is to care more for one's own safety, comfort, and ease than for doing what God gives one to do. To hate one's life, is to hold ease, personal pleasure, safety, comfort, as of no consequence, when the doing of God's will, one's duty, is concerned. Jesus hated his life when he gave

it up to suffering, shame, and death rather than fail in doing his Father's will. So must we all always hold our life if we would worthily follow Christ. The first thing must ever be our duty. We must never count the cost nor think of the danger. The duty of love must be done, though in doing it we empty out our whole life for our friend.

"If you sit down at set of sun
And count the acts that you have done,
And counting, find
One self-denying act, one word
That eased the heart of him who heard,
One glance most kind
That fell like sunshine where it went,
Then you may count that hour well spent.

But if, through all the livelong day,
You've cheered no heart by yea or nay;
If, through it all,
You've nothing done, which you can trace,
That brought the sunshine to one face;
No act most small
That helped some soul, and nothing cost,
Then count that day as worse than lost."

We need never fear that the losing of life in service of love, in Christ's name, is losing

indeed. It is saving that is losing. It is he who keeps his life from duties involving suffering and sacrifice that is the real loser. He who gives out his life in doing God's will shall find it again. He who sows his life in the furrows of human need shall reap a harvest of blessing. As Whittier sings: —

> Wherever through the ages rise
> The altars of self-sacrifice,
> Where love its arms has opened wide,
> Or man for man has calmly died,
> I see the same white wings outspread
> That hovered o'er the Master's head.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TAKING GOD INTO COUNSEL.

"I will commit my way, O Lord, to thee,
Nor doubt thy love, though dark the way may be,
Nor murmur, for the sorrow is from God,
And there is comfort also in thy rod.

I will not seek to know the future years,
Nor cloud to-day with dark to-morrow's fears;
I will ask a light from heaven, to show
How, step by step, my pilgrimage should go."

We like to ask advice of wise and trusted friends. All life's paths are new to us. We do not know the road. It is always true of us that we "have not passed this way hitherto." We need guidance — a hand to lead us. We like, as we enter an untried way, to talk about it with some one who has tried it already and can give us advice. This is one of the advantages which a young person finds in having an older friend. "Old men for counsel." If inexperience turned oftener to experience for

advice there would be fewer wrecks on life's broad and storm-swept seas.

Few promises mean more, when practically interpreted, than that one which tells us that if we acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, he will direct our paths. We all need direction in our life-paths. We are continually coming to points where we cannot decide what we ought to do, which way we ought to take. We turn to our friends for counsel. The little child puts its hand in the mother's. The blind man seeks some one with good eyes to lead him. Inexperience looks to experience. But human guidance is inadequate. It is short-sighted, and cannot know certainly what is best. It is ignorant, and may mislead unwittingly. Wrong advice, though meant for good, has wrecked many a life destiny. Even love may guide fatally. Peter in his impulsive warm-heartedness would have turned Jesus away from his cross. Many times human love has held back its dear ones from paths of sacrifice, hardship, and loss, which were the divinely ordained paths for those

feet. Human guidance is not enough. We want something truer, wiser, safer, something infallible. And that is just what we have assured to us in this promise of divine direction. We may have Christ for our counsellor, and he never advises mistakenly. He knows all life's paths, not simply as God, all-knowing, but as man, having passed through every way. He has promised to direct all our paths.

There is a condition; we must acknowledge him in all our ways. Most of us acknowledge the Lord in some of our ways. We turn to him in the time of great trials, or in sore dangers. Even scoffers and atheists have been known, in the moment of peril, as in a storm at sea, to fall upon their knees and call upon God for help. The most ungodly people, when alarming sickness is on them, or when death stares them in the face, want to take hold of the hand of God. There are none of us who do not at certain times crave the divine direction and help. But the condition of the promise reads, "In all thy ways acknowledge him."

Perhaps we acknowledge God in spiritual things, but shut him out of the other parts of our life. We talk to him about our soul, but not about our daily work, our week-day life. What did you pray for yesterday? Did you men talk to God about your business, your buying and selling, your farm-work, your common task-work? Did you women pray about your household affairs, asking God to help you keep tidy homes, and to train your children well, to be sweet-tempered, gentle, patient, thoughtful? Did you young people talk with God about your studies, your amusements, your friendships, and your books?

We make a mistake when we take God into our counsel in any mere section of our life. Some one has said, "Each act of life may be like a psalm of praise; and all we do in the home, the field, the counting-room, may be as truly to the glory of God as the most elaborate ceremonies of religion." Mr. Ruskin says, "Unless we perform divine service in every willing act of our life, we never perform it at all." That is what is involved in the

counsel of holy Scripture that in all our ways we acknowledge God.

To acknowledge Christ is to recognize him as Lord and Master of our life, and then to look to him in all ways, great or small, for guidance. Elizabeth Fry, during her last illness, said to her daughter, "I believe I can truly say that, since the age of seventeen, I have never waked from sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or by night, without my first waking thought being how I might best serve the Lord." In this continual recognition of Christ as her life's guide she fulfilled the condition on which we are promised that he will direct our paths.

It was a prayer of George Herbert that he might be led wholly to resign the rudder of his life to the sacred will of God, to be moved always "as thy love shall sway." A writer says, referring to this, "How much fretting, how much worry, it would spare us all, if we asked our heavenly Father that he would cause us to lean utterly, in perfect faith, in cheerful, unquestioning obedience, upon his will and

wisdom, whether in life's trivial concerns, or in those shades of darkness from which we recoil in fear!"

But here again we must not forget that it is submission "in all our ways" that leads to peace. We are very willing, most of us at least, to acknowledge God in a sort of grateful way while he directs us in paths in which we incline to go, paths that are pleasant and agreeable. We can easily worship the "sweet will of God," when this will is indeed sweet to our natural taste. But how is it when God directs us to go the way we do not want to go, to do the thing that is unpleasant, that will cause pain or require sacrifice or loss? How is it when the voice of God, answering to our question, bids us take the path that leads to a cross; bids us turn away from the pleasant thing that we crave; bids us give up the friendship that has grown dear to our heart, but is drawing us away from God; bids us give into the Father's hand the child, or the loved one, we so desire to keep with us? "In all thy ways" means the hard ways as

well as the easy ways, the thorny path as well as the path of flowers, when it breaks our heart as well as when it gives us joy or gladness.

Yet we are continually coming to points at which we hesitate. "In all but this, dear Lord," we say, "I can take thy way and do thy will." Still the answer comes, "In all thy ways, my child." There must be no reserve, no withholding, no exception. The loved sin must be given up, though it seem only a little one, though giving it up be like cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye. The hard path must be taken, though it lead among thorns that pierce the feet, over sharp stones, through fire and flood. The painful duty must be done, though it cost place, ease, position, though it lead to want, suffering, homelessness. The bitter grief must be accepted, though it seem to take all and leave nothing, and must be accepted sweetly, lovingly, cheerfully, with unquestioning faith.

"He chose this path for thee,
Though well he knew sharp thorns would pierce thy feet,
Knew how the brambles would obstruct the way,

Knew all the hidden dangers thou wouldst meet,
  Knew how thy faith would falter day by day;
And still the whisper echoed, 'Yes, I see
  This path is best for thee.'

  He chose this path for thee;
What needst thou more? This sweeter truth to know,
  That all along these strange, bewildering ways,
O'er rocky steeps and where dark rivers flow,
  His loving arms will bear thee 'all the days.'
A few steps more, and thou thyself shalt see
  This path is best for thee."

Here is a little story from an English magazine that fits in as illustration. A poor woman in the hospital was told by the matron that she could not recover, that her complaint was incurable. It is very hard to be told this, — that one never can hope to be better, that one's life-work is done. However, this poor sufferer was not overcome by what the kindly matron told her. She did not shrink from pain and death. But there was still one point at which she could not yield to God's way. With tears she said that she gladly and patiently accepted God's will so far as her own pain and death were concerned, but she could

not bear the thought of leaving her children alone. She declared that no one could induce her to feel resigned on this matter.

The visitor to whom she said this had no words with which to chide her. She could only say to the poor woman, "Yours is untold sorrow, far beyond my understanding, but God knows all about it; God understands. Will you not tell him just how you feel? Tell him what you have told me, all your pain, your anxiety about your little children, your sore dread at thought of leaving them alone in this world." Then the visitor went away, promising to pray for the poor woman in her sore struggle. In a day or two she came again, and found the sufferer calm and patient. She had told God — had poured out her whole heart in unrestrained prayer, and she said to her friend, "I am just leaving everything with God; not only whether I shall live or die, but each one of my little children, if I am to be taken from them. Everything is safe with him. I feel it now; I know it."

She had acknowledged God in this hard

way, as in all other and easier ways. She had acknowledged him, too, by telling him all about her trouble, by going over her anxieties with him, and now there was no trouble, no anxiety, any longer. There was now no "anything but this" in her submission. To the Master's words: "In all thy ways," she could now respond, "Yes, Lord, in all my ways."

This is the secret of peace — this losing of our will in Christ's. So long as we struggle, and fail in even the smallest degree to acquiesce in the divine will and way, our peace is disturbed and broken; but if we cease all resistance, and just lie quiet in God's hands, and let him have his way with us, the peace is full and complete.

"The fever went at the turn of the night,
She lies like a lily white and still,
But her eyes are full of the old love-light;
She'll live, if it be God's will.

God's will, had it been to snatch her away,
We had bowed, we had knelt, we had kissed the rod;
But his own dear will bids our darling stay,
And we — we just thank God."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THIS LIFE AND THE AFTER LIFE.

"I cannot make it seem a day to dread
When from this dear earth I shall journey out
To that still dearer country of the dead,
And join the lost ones so long dreamed about.
I love this world; yet I shall love to go
And meet the friends who wait for me, I know.

I never stand beside a bier, and see
The seal of death set on some well-loved face,
But that I think, 'One more to welcome me
When I shall cross the intervening space
Between this land and that one over there;
One more to make the strange land beyond seem fair.'"

THE continuity of life here and hereafter is a Bible teaching. There is no real break. Jesus said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." St. Paul spoke of his death as his departure from earth, as if he were going to another country. He referred to Christians gone as "absent from the body, and at home with the Lord." We should try

to be Christians in our thought about dying. The trouble is that we so associate all our friend's life with his body, that when it lies before us cold and lifeless, all of our friend seems to have ceased to be. But the body is not, never was, our friend. It may be cold, and our friend be living in rich and beautiful life. These truths are put very clearly in some lines of Sir Edwin Arnold's on the death of Abdallah: —

> Faithful friends! It lies, I know,
> Pale and white and cold as snow
> And ye say, "Abdallah's dead!"
> Weeping at the feet and head,
> I can see your falling tears,
> I can hear your sighs and prayers;
> Yet I smile and whisper this, —
> "*I* am not the thing you kiss;
> Cease your tears, and let it lie;
> It *was* mine, it is not I."
>
> Sweet friends! What the women lave
> For its last bed of the grave,
> Is a hut which I am quitting,
> Is a garment no more fitting,
> Is a cage from which, at last,
> Like a hawk my end has passed.

Love the inmate, not the room, —
The wearer, not the garb, — the plume
Of the falcon, not the bars
Which kept him from these splendid stars.

Loving friends! Be wise, and dry
Straightway every weeping eye;
What ye lift upon the bier
Is not worth a wistful tear.
'Tis an empty seashell, — one
Out of which the pearl is gone;
The shell is broken, *it* lies there,
The pearl, the all, the soul, is here.
'Tis an earthen jar whose lid
Allah sealed, the while it hid
That treasure of his treasury
A mind that loved him; let it lie,
Let the shard be earth's once more,
Since the gold shines in his store!

Life hereafter will not be so different from life here as we sometimes imagine it will be. We shall go on with living in the other world very much as if nothing had happened. Dying is an experience we need not trouble ourselves much about if we are true believers in Christ. There is a mystery about it; but when we have passed through it we shall probably find

that it is a natural and very simple event, perhaps but little more serious than sleeping over night and waking in the morning. It will not hurt us in any way. It will not blot out any beautiful thing in our life. It will end nothing that is worth while. The things we have loved here, we shall continue to love. The things we have learned to do well, we shall probably continue to do, at least in some form. Dying is just going out to test our learning here, and to live out our lessons. As Robert Browning says: —

> I go to prove my soul!
> I see my way as birds their trackless way.
> I shall arrive: what time, what circuit first
> I ask not;
> In some time — His good time —
> I shall arrive;
> He guides me and the birds.

It is intensely interesting to think of life as immortal — stretching on forever. Dying is not a boundary, but merely an incident in the way. We can plan for work that will go on for a thousand years — for ten thou-

sand years. Life here is short even at the longest. We cannot finish in threescore and ten years the great things we dream of in our best moods. Then, only comparatively a few lives reach this full limit of age. It is but a little that we can do in our short, broken years. We begin things, and we are interrupted in the midst of them. Before they are half finished we are called away to something else, or laid aside by illness, or our life ends, and the work remains incomplete. It is pathetic, when a busy man has been called away suddenly, to go into his office, his study, or his place of work, and see the unfinished things he has left, — the letter half written, the book half read, the column of figures half added up, the picture begun but not completed. Life is full of fragments, the mere beginnings of things. If there were nothing beyond death, little could come of this poor fragmentary living and doing. But when we know that life will go on without serious break through endless years, it puts a new meaning into every noble and worthy

beginning. Every right and good thing, however small it may seem, shall live forever.

There is comfort in this for those whose life seems a failure here. There are many such lives. They have been crushed and torn by sorrow, defeated in life's struggles. They have toiled hard, but misfortune has followed them in everything they have attempted. There will be time enough in the eternal years for such lives to grow into full and perfect beauty.

There are lives which are cut off before any of their powers are developed. A thousand fond hopes gather about them — all a mother's dreams for her child. Suddenly they are stricken down in infancy or early youth. The bud had not time to open in the short summer. It is lifted away, still folding up in its close-shut calyxes all its possibilities of loveliness, power, and life. Sorrow grieves over the hopes which seem blighted, and cuts on the marble shaft or block some symbol of incompleteness. Yet when we believe in immortality, what matters it that the bud did

not open and unfold its beauties this side the grave? There will be time enough in immortality for every such life to put forth all its loveliness.

An Easter lily was sent in having on its stem several unopened buds. In a day or two these buds had unfolded, and poured their fragrance upon the air. So will it be with the lives of children and youth who pass from earth to heaven; they will open out in the heavenly warmth until every possibility of their being has reached its best.

There are some good people who lose hope in this world's disheartenments. Their souls are graves full of buried things. Down into these dark sepulchres have gone early dreams, visions of beauty, sweet thoughts, noble intentions, sacred feelings, and brilliant expectations. They bow in sadness over their dead, saying, "There is no use in my going on. Life is empty for me now. There is nothing left worth living for. Every sweet flower has faded." Christian faith should dispel any such feeling. Into the grave of Jesus went one

evening the sweetest hopes, the holiest loves, the gentlest thoughts, the brightest visions, the fondest dreams of a little company of loyal friends. At that grave, as the sun sank low, weeping ones stood, saying, "All our hearts' hopes lie buried here — all our joy, all our love." But three days later that grave was opened, and those buried hopes, joys, and affections were raised up, and lived again in blessed beauty. What the friends of Jesus thought they had lost forever they had not lost at all. Their hearts' treasures were only buried that they might spring up in immortal beauty. The dull seeds became glorious Easter lilies.

So will it be with all the precious things of Christian faith which seem to perish. In Christ nothing that is good or lovely can be really lost. The dreams of youth which meant so much to us, and which we seem to have lost, — they have served their purpose, and are lost only as blossoms are lost when they fall away to give place to the fruit.

We can lose our beautiful things only in

sin. Sin's grave is deep and dark, and there is no resurrection for the precious things of life which go down into it. And oh, what treasures are buried in this hopeless sepulchre! Innocence, purity of heart, sweet feelings, heavenly yearnings, visions of Christ, hopes of glory, holy affections, the strength and joy of life, possibilities of nobleness, childhood's faith, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely — what heaps of life's best things go down into sin's deep grave! And this grave was never broken open. The stone was never rolled from its door. No vision of angels was ever seen in its dark chamber. What is buried in sin's grave is hopelessly lost. It never can be gotten back again, though men seek for it diligently with tears. Lost innocence comes twice to none.

But in Christ nothing beautiful or good ever perishes. A little child stooped to catch the sunlight which streamed on the floor. In her dimpled hand she grasped it, and reached and strove for more.

"But the sunbeam would not linger
In that chubby little hand,
Though it lay upon each finger
Like a bright and golden band.

Still, the striving gave her pleasure,
And the light yet lingering lies
In most fair and gladsome measure,
In the depth of her blue eyes."

This is a parable. Though we may not grasp and hold the very things we strive to reach, there is a blessing in the seeking which itself more than meets the cost; and besides, we get the substance of our quest, though the form eludes us. The holy visions which seem to vanish as we pursue them, really hide in the depth of our heart, and stay there to brighten and enrich our life forever. So it is with all the precious things we cherish for a time and then seem to lose. If they are pure, true, and worthy things, we have not lost them; we never can lose them. Abraham never got the promised land, though he left all to seek it. To the end of his life he journeyed on in his quest, but died a pilgrim still on the way.

Yet in his heart he found better things than he sought, not a country, but the rewards of faith and obedience. There always are good people who pursue hopes and dreams which they never overtake; yet in their souls they find in their quest holier hopes and fairer dreams than those which they miss. Those who seem to fail ofttimes get most out of this world which they can carry to heaven with them.

The same is true of the joys and blessings which we seem to lose out of our hands in life's vicissitudes. We do not lose them. The material forms of things may drop from our clasp, but the spiritual quality or beauty in them we never can lose. We cannot lose a friend. The mother never can lose her child. A woman of ninety said that her first baby, which had died when she was but a little past twenty, had stayed as a vision of beauty in her heart all the seventy years. We never can lose a mother. Her life is wrought too inextricably with ours ever to be taken out. A pure and tender joy once cherished never

can be lost out of our heart. We may feel its thrill no more; that which gave it may have passed out of our life; but a holy joy, once experienced, becomes part of our being, and never can be taken from us.

If the Angelus were lent to you for a few days, and hung in your parlor, and then were removed, you would really have the picture forever. During these few days of possession it would enter into your soul, and though you should never see it again, you never could lose it. So it is that beautiful things, holy affections, gentle friendships, tender joys, sweet fancies, precious hopes, radiant dreams, once ours, though only for a little while, are ours forever. The forms may vanish, but the spirit remains.

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